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AS CYBELE BROKE THE BOTTLE OF DURGUNDY OVER THE RAIL, SHE CRIED: "QUEEN OF THE SEA, WELCOME TO THY THRONE!"

The Sea Spy;

OR,

MORTIMOR MONK,

The Hunchback Millionaire.

A Tale of Sea and Land Fifty Years Ago.

BY NED BUNTLIN.

CHAPTER I.

THE BIRTH OF THE QUEEN OF THE SEA.

THE private ship-yard of Mortimor Monk, the noted and famous Hunchback Millionaire, was full of visitors, gathered there to witness the launch of a beautiful clipper-schooner of large size, which he had advertised as having been built expressly for the West India fruit-trade.

The yard was on the East River, just above "the Hook," and the vessel, full-rigged, with sails bent and every spar aloft, ready to go to sea as soon as she was afloat, looked very fine, even on the ways.

Everything was ready but the tide. The builders had to wait till the flood had reached its height, for the time for a successful launch was just as it turned to ebb.

Forward, near the sharp bow, ready to perform the act of "christening" or naming the vessel, stood Cybele, the owner's daughter, the loveliest maiden that day in all that great city, and near her the acting captain of the day, her cousin, Alva De Lorme, who was to sail the vessel on a trial-trip down the bay as soon as she was launched.

A full crew and a few visiting friends were on deck, and among these Mortimor Monk passed to and fro, his really noble and expressive face wreathed in smiles, every look full of happiness and proud content. But for that great ungainly hump between his shoulders he would have been called a handsome man.

His form was tall and well proportioned in limb, his hands and feet were small, his features regular, his large gray eyes bright and expressive.

"Ready there, below!" he shouted to the carpenters who stood, mallet in hand, ready to knock away the braces which held the vessel on the "ways;" "the flood begins to slack!"

Cybele at once took her station above the carved figure-head forward, and the sailors made ready to hoist sail and colors the moment the vessel reached her future home in the bright-glancing water.

A minute of breathless expectancy and then, clear and loud, the millionaire shouted:

"All's right! Let her go!"

A few rapid blows and the vessel settled on the ways, then, slowly at first, but in a moment swiftly, she slid down toward the water.

Just as the sharp bow entered the stream Cybele raised the bottle of red Burgundy chosen for the occasion, and breaking it over the rail, cried out:

"Queen of the Sea, welcome to thy throne!"

The schooner was named, and while from her trucks bright flags streamed to the wind, thousands of lookers-on rent the air with cheers of congratulation.

As she sped far out on the bosom of the river young De Lorme gave the orders to hoist main-sail and jib; and, as soon as she was steady in the water, men sprung aloft and loosed her fore-topsail, and in a few minutes, answering to her helm gracefully, she headed down toward Governor's Island, followed by a pretty little white harbor yacht, of three or four tons, the "Zephyr," the special property of Cybele, the fair daughter of the millionaire.

In the light breeze, under all sail, the little yacht held her own with the larger vessel, and Cybele clapped her jeweled hands and cried out to her father:

"A race—a race! I'll wager that my yacht leads the way to Sandy Hook!"

"Wait till the wind freshens as we draw out into the bay, child, and you will see the difference between thy pretty Zephyr and this ocean Queen."

The father answered kindly, but truly, for, though the gallant little yacht followed in the wake of the larger craft, she was soon left far astern, for the Queen of the Sea developed wonderful speed as soon as she got a breeze, and young De Lorme had got her sails set so as to draw to advantage.

It will take a full voyage to learn her trim, and know just how to stow ballast and cargo," said the young man, addressing Mortimor Monk.

"She'll do! She'll do! I doubt if there be as fast a vessel running from this port. And she'll be weatherly, withal. She stands up stiff as a church under her canvas, and we are running at least twelve knots to the hour. And speed is all that is needed!"

The visitors were called below to a banquet prepared for the occasion, and, for the next hour or more, were engaged as pleasantly as

one could imagine. When they came on deck, the schooner was in the lower bay close to Sandy Hook.

"What craft is that coming in?" asked Mr. Monk, pointing to a large, rakish-looking vessel of the same rig as the Queen of the Sea.

"The revenue-cutter Washington—the fastest vessel in the United States service!" answered the pilot, of whom he asked the question.

"Good! Now we'll learn what this craft can do. Captain De Lorme, when that revenue-cutter gets abreast of us, square away and see what our speed is, as compared with hers!"

"Ay, ay, sir! But she has more canvas set than we can show. We have no top-gallant-sail to set and she has a square foresail, which we have not!"

"Good! If she beats us with this addition of canvas, we will have the sails ready the next time we have a chance at her!"

They had not long to wait for the trial.

The cutter, full fifty tons the larger, came up the bay with every sail drawing, and a swath of foam rolling from each side of her sharp bows.

When she was exactly abeam, De Lorme had his men ready at braces and sheets, and ordering the helm hard up, brought his craft around sharp on her heel, and though she lost a couple of lengths before she headed on the same course with the cutter, she was soon flying through the water with the wind on her quarter.

The officers and crew of the cutter, seeing that the vessel was new, and evidently had turned to give them a race, cheered loudly and dipped their colors in salute, while Mortimor Monk and the crew of the Queen of the Sea returned the compliment, and then watched the speed of the two vessels.

"Come aft, every man!" cried De Lorme; "we are too much by the head, I think."

The crew and visitors—between thirty and forty all told—made quite a difference in the trim of the sharp-built vessel, and now she slowly but surely began to gain on the cutter, despite the fact that the latter carried the most canvas.

Mortimor Monk was delighted.

"Now, Pet, what do you think of our Sea Queen?" he asked his daughter. "You need not fret because she left your pretty Zephyr behind."

"I do not fret over trifles, my father—that you well know!" was her reply.

"But look!" she added. "They are increasing their sail."

"Yes. They are setting a weather topmast studding-sail!" said De Lorme. "And we have no booms fitted yet, though the sails are on board!"

With this addition of sail the cutter barely held her own, and scarce a biscuit's toss apart, the two swift vessels flew up the bay.

So evenly, too, that first one and then the other would gain a few yards, as the wind freshened or slackened, and alternately cheers rose from either crew as one or the other seemed to get the advantage.

The young lieutenant who was in temporary command of the cutter stood on the weather-quarter rail of his vessel, steadied by a boat davit, and coned his ship, watching every flaw of wind, and giving the man at the wheel sharp orders now and then to hold his course and lose no distance.

Up through the "Narrows," grim batteries seen on either side, they came, and people flocked down on beach and pier to watch the race.

CHAPTER II.

A SEA BAPTISM AND A SEA ACQUAINTANCE.

MEANTIME young De Lorme sent men below to shift ballast, and ere long the Queen of the Sea began again slowly but surely to lead her warlike antagonist.

Cybele, wild with joy, stepped on the rail and waved a mocking adieu to the officer on the other craft, laughing, as she kissed her hand and cried out:

"Farewell! Farewell!"

At that instant, unused to such insecure footing, she slipped, and a shriek of terror broke from her lips as she fell headlong into the water.

"Hard down helm and lower a boat!" shouted young De Lorme, leaping overboard to her rescue even as he gave the order.

The cutter, ranging up just astern, was seen to shorten sail and round to, only a second later, and from her deck came a ringing cheer when De Lorme was seen gallantly breasting the foam-capped waves, while, with one hand, he upheld the form of the fair girl and kept her head free from the stifling water.

Before the headway of either vessel was fairly checked two boats were lowered away and, it was a race between them, which would be first to reach those in peril.

In one, the young lieutenant of the cutter; in the other, Mortimor Monk himself.

Both reached the scene so nearly together that, as the young officer grasped the form of the fair girl on one side, the millionaire seized his nephew on the other, and both were drawn from the water, drenched, of course, but not suffering.

Shuddering from her narrow escape, Cybele opened her eyes to look in a handsome, earnest face bent over her—that of the young lieutenant commanding the cutter, and to listen to his expression:

"Thank Heaven you are saved!"

"Is my cousin safe, also—he who so bravely sprung into the water to save me?" she asked.

"Yes; he is in the boat which came from the schooner;—the old hunchback yonder pulled him from the water," was the answer, the officer little dreaming what relation that "old hunchback" bore to the fair creature in his boat.

But he soon learned, for Mortimor Monk hailed him and said, in far more complimentary language than the officer had used:

"Fair sir, if you will add to my obligations by rowing to my schooner with my daughter, you will favor her and me, since I see she is conscious and able to sit up."

"So lovely, and his daughter? What a brute I was to speak so carelessly!" muttered the officer, as he headed his boat for the Queen of the Sea.

He was alongside to starboard as Mortimor Monk helped his nephew on board on the other side, and a minute later, he helped Cybele up on the deck, and was met by the "old hunchback," who graciously thanked him for his timely service.

The officer was confused, for, when he glanced at the card that was handed him, and which bore the name of Mortimor Monk, of the importing house of Monk and Gunther, it flashed on his mind that he had been officially ordered to keep a special lookout for vessels consigned to that firm, since they had been strongly suspected of defrauding the revenue.

"We will be glad to renew our thanks at our home on Beekman street," added Mr. Monk, who bade his daughter go below to rest, while he signaled to the Zephyr, now near at hand, to come alongside.

He knew his daughter kept a change or two of yacht clothing in the cabin of her boat, and it was now very necessary for her comfort and health that she should get on dry garments.

Young De Lorme was now introduced to the revenue officer, who expressed his wonder at the speed and beauty of the new craft, which he now learned had been launched that day.

"What trade is she intended for?" he asked of Mr. Monk, the owner.

"The West India fruit trade, which requires fast vessels, for the cargoes would rot on a long voyage!" was the answer.

"True! I think when she has all her spars and canvas in place, she will prove to be the fastest vessel out of this or any other American port!" said the officer—Lieutenant Fontelroy. "We never have met our match in a breeze like this till to-day!"

"She is a clipper, and will sail better yet when she is limbered up!" assured Mr. Monk.

His nephew had gone below for a change of garments, a suit being furnished by one of the new mates from his chest below.

The lieutenant lingered, though his vessel, hove to, lay awaiting his return.

He wanted to get one more glance at the loveliest face and form he had ever gazed upon.

He was not long kept in suspense.

In a few minutes, while he was complimenting Mr. Monk on the beauty of his vessel below and aloft, Cybele came tripping up from the cabin in a neat yachting suit of blue and gold, her face as bright and fair as a rose glistening in the dew of morning.

An instant later Alva De Lorme also returned to the deck in a dry suit with a cheerful look on his manly face.

"I have waited only to congratulate you, fair lady, and you also, gallant sir, upon your complete recovery from all visible effects of your involuntary bath!" said the lieutenant. "I hope we may meet again under less exciting circumstances."

"Thanks, Mr. Fontelroy!" replied Cybele; "I hope if I ever am so careless again, I may have the same brave assistance at hand!"

"I suppose, Mr. De Lorme, I can greet you as the future commander of this beautiful vessel?" queried the officer.

"No, sir! I have already had as much sea experience as I care for. I think of going into the Northwestern fur trade."

Mortimor Monk frowned, though he did not speak. He had built this vessel for an express purpose, and he intended that Alva De Lorme should command her.

"Ah, that is a profitable, but a fearfully dangerous trade. The wild Indians are so treacherous!"

"Not more so than wild white men!" added De Lorme, laughing.

The officer now bowed his adieu, and re-entered his boat, promising, as he did so, to accept the invitation of Mr. Monk to visit him in his city mansion.

Regaining his own deck, the young officer had his boat hoisted up, and the cutter was at once put on her course again.

The Queen of the Sea also filled away, but no longer sought a race with the other craft, for her foresail had been brailed up and her flying-jib hauled down and furled while she was hove to.

One steered for an anchorage off the Battery in the North River, while the other headed back to a dock in the yard from which she had been launched, for there was much yet to be done to her before she would be ready for a sea-voyage.

CHAPTER III.

THE HUNCHBACK MILLIONAIRE AND HIS MYSTERY.

A FEW words about the past of Mortimor Monk will enable the reader better to understand his future in this story.

When Cybele was an infant and Alva De Lorme but five years old, he brought them over from England—his and their native land. It was rumored that he had to fly from the kingdom because he had killed a nobleman in a duel. But of this he never spoke himself. He brought some capital, and by judicious investments at once laid the foundation of a colossal fortune.

He leased a famous inn in Water street, known as the "Pewter Mug," patronized by captains, mates and the better class of seamen when in port, and it was so profitable that he soon purchased it. Next he purchased a three-story and basement building on the same street. In the basement he established a large junk-shop. On the next floor a cheap restaurant for longshoremen, poor sailors, etc. In the second story he had bunks erected for cheap lodgers. And in the third he had an oakum-factory where old tarred rope was picked into oakum and the neighboring ship-yards supplied with calking material. Many a poor man who could get no other employment found board and lodging there, paying for the same by picking oakum.

Soon after this a dry-goods, silk and lace importing house started in Pearl street. The firm name was Monk and Gunther. But Mortimor Monk, needless to say, was the sole head of the concern.

Years sped along, and many vessels were registered under the name of Mortimor Monk. As his daughter was fast growing into womanhood, he purchased a handsome mansion in Beekman street, and here Cybele and her Cousin Alva under private tutors received such education as few of their age could acquire.

All this time the Hunchback grew richer and richer until the fame of the millionaire ran all over the country. Everything he touched seemed to turn to gold. All his investments were profitable.

The day after the Queen of the Sea had made her trial trip, the ship-owner called Alva De Lorme into his private office in the Beekman street mansion.

"What did you mean, young man," he asked, rather sternly, "when you said yesterday to that revenue officer that you did not intend to go to sea any more?"

"Precisely what I said, Uncle Mortimor," his nephew quietly answered.

"You know that I built the Queen of the Sea expressly for you to command?"

"I have heard you say so."

"It is my intention to give you half ownership in her."

"I must respectfully decline to accept it, Uncle Mortimor."

"Boy, are you mad? When she is ready for sea she will have cost me near forty thousand dollars."

"Fully that, I have no doubt. But you have placed it beyond my power to have anything to do with her in the trade for which she was built."

"I do not understand you. Explain yourself."

"While I was engaged on your foreign letters in your private counting-room three days ago, you told Mr. Gunther of your firm that you had built this vessel ostensibly for the fruit trade. But under cover of that her real business would be to smuggle silks, satins and laces in free from the French West India Islands and cloths and linens from the English ports."

"Very true. I did say so."

"And that is a business I cannot engage in."

"Pray, why not?" sneeringly asked the old man.

"Because, when at your request I took out papers of naturalization in this country, I swore to obey the laws of the land. I will not break my oath."

"That is all fol-de-rol. What do you or I care for a rotten republic like this? That was a mere matter of form. Such an oath is not worth a second thought."

"To me, sir, it is. And as soon as I heard you say what you intended to do with the new schooner my resolution was formed. I will not go to sea in her. I have been offered an agency in his fur trade by Mr. Astor, and being of an age to control my own actions, have decided to accept it."

"Boy, you do not know what you are throwing away. I got you to become naturalized so there would be nothing in the way to prevent your holding landed as well as other property here. I have looked on you as co-heir with Cybele to all I possess. And for a mere whim you would destroy all this future? Take time to reconsider. There is a vast profit on goods introduced without payment of these outrageous

and extortionate duties to this crazy government. Already our firm has made, or saved over a hundred thousand dollars in that way; yet our arrangements have been very limited thus far. There is small danger of discovery, so far as that is concerned. A full manifest of fruit is made out—it covers the other goods. If there is less fruit on board when the craft arrives—it has decayed and been thrown overboard, you understand?"

"Yes, uncle—that part is easy enough. But to break my oath of obedience to the laws is another thing. I will not do it! So seek another captain for your dainty clipper. I held command for one day—that is enough, for we had no laws to break on a trial-trip."

"If I seek another captain, sir, I may seek another heir!"

The millionaire was very angry. His gray eyes flashed and his voice was harsh and loud.

"So be it, Uncle Mortimor! I am already your debtor for many kindnesses. I shall not forget it, nor cease to be grateful because you cast me off!"

"'Twill be your fault, not mine, if I do. Take time and think this matter over!"

Mortimor Monk rose and left the room without waiting to hear more. His heavy, quick step told that he was in an ill-humor.

"What is the matter with father?" asked Cybele, coming in and looking with anxiety on the pale, firm face of her cousin.

"He is angry with me, my dear cousin, because I will not break the oath I have taken to obey the laws of my adopted land and go into the smuggling business to add to his already enormous wealth!"

"It is cruel! His very soul seems warped by this inordinate greed for wealth! I honor you for your resolution!"

"Thanks, dear cousin! Your approval is a joy to me."

"I only approve that which I feel to be right, dear Cousin Alva. And now—since he has left the house to go to the Pearl street store, I wish to ask you a serious question. Do you really believe that he is my father? I will tell you why I ask. Much as I try to love him for his constant kindness, my heart in reality does not throb for him, as the heart of a child should for a real father! I cannot give a reason—but I feel that it is so. Yesterday, that revenue officer, not knowing our relationship, spoke of him as the 'Old Hunchback,' when I was in his boat. I did not get angry, as I ought, if my heart had told me that he spoke thus slightly of my father. When I ask him to tell me about the mother whom I cannot remember, he gets angry and bids me never speak of her! Oh, Alva, I wish I knew the truth! What do you think, cousin?"

"That I would give a great deal, dear Cybele, to be sure he is not your father. For I know he is my uncle—the brother of my dear dead mother. You know she died only the week before we sailed from England, and I plainly remember her, and that she called him brother, and gave me into his care on her deathbed. As my cousin, almost as near as a sister, I dare not love you as I would if no relationship existed between us. For, to me, you are the fairest, bravest and best little woman on earth!"

"Oh, Alva!"

She blushed a carnation red and trembled like a leaf on a quivering limb when she spoke.

"You are not angry, Cybele?"

"Angry with you whom I love more than life, ten thousand times? No—no, dear Alva; I never can be angry with you. But, answer me: is there one point of resemblance, in disposition, or in look, which would indicate that he is my parent?"

"Not one, Cybele! Only his great attachment to you would seem to give it credence. He must surely love you, for never does he allow a wish of yours to pass ungratified—never in any mood does he frown on you, no matter how ill-tempered he may be with others."

"True, dear Alva. But, why is it that the older I grow, the less I seem to love him? In truth I have grown suspicious that, in some way, he has cruelly treated, perhaps made away with the mother that bore me. Never breathe this secret. But one day, he was called away suddenly and left an iron casket open on his desk. With a woman's curiosity, I glanced within, and I saw a portrait, painted in miniature on ivory, so like myself as I am now, that I at first thought it had been painted for me and from me. The same dark-blue eyes, hair the color of old gold, the complexion fair also. Under it was a name and date. 'Alice—1806.' That was not all. In the back of the golden locket was a braid of hair, the color of mine. And on it a dark red stain, as of blood. I saw that, and, shuddering, laid it down and fled from the room. I heard his step, coming in haste, and not for the world would I have been discovered by him with that picture in my hand. I have never seen the casket open since. Neither have I dared to ask him a question—of whom is that a miniature or portrait? The date next the name is that of the year before I was born! I feel almost sure it is the picture of my mother. And perhaps her life-blood stains that tress of hair! It makes me wild to think of it!"

"It is very strange!" returned young De Lorme. "Some day we will endeavor to pierce the mystery!"

"Do, dear cousin. If I could but prove myself a nameless orphan and be possessed of your love, I would forego all the luxuries that wealth casts before me—turn my back on all but you in this world!"

"Cybele, you are an angel, and I love you! Ah—a servant comes! We are in a house full of spies, I fear!"

A servant entered, and on a silver tray bore the card of a visitor.

Cybele glanced at it and laughed.

"He might save himself the trouble of calling!" she said, handing the card to De Lorme.

He read the name:

"LIEUTENANT C. FONTELROY,
"U. S. Revenue Marine."

"We will go together to meet him in the parlor!" said Cybele.

CHAPTER IV.

A CAPTAIN FOUND—A MYSTERY TREMBLES ON THE AIR.

In the great "tap-room" of the "Pewter Mug," still owned by Mortimor Monk and managed by a superintendent, or steward, there was a large assemblage of old sea-captains and mates on the second evening which succeeded the day of the launch described in our first chapter.

A few stood up by the long bar, behind which a very pretty maid served out liquid "refreshments" when called for, but very many were seated around some circular tables, capable of accommodating parties of three or four, which extended along one side and both ends of the room.

These were supplied with what they called for by three or more active boy waiters. The beverage called for almost always denoted the nationalities of those who gave the order.

The Yankees wanted New England rum and molasses, or cider with ginger in it. The English, old and new ale, 'alf and 'alf, or else Jamaica rum and sugar hot. The Hollanders took their Schnapps or Schiedam gin, raw, and the few French or Spaniards drank cheap red wines by the bottle.

At a table near the door a group of American captains were discussing the launch which they had witnessed and the build and rig of the new accession to the merchant fleet in port.

"She's too tarnation sharp, for my idee," declared one whose nasal twang sounded Kennebeckish. "She'll be more under water than atop of it in a heavy sea."

"There's where you're wrong, Cap'n Peters," demurred a younger skipper. "Sharp as she is, with her flaring bows she'll rise over a sea like a duck, while a bluff bow like that of your old brig will butt right into it, and never get out of the way of a sea till she has soused under her whole length. The rake of her masts lifts her. Don't ye see?"

"No—consarn my skin if I do! She'll be fast in smooth water, I'll allow, but when it comes to carrying, my old tub, as you call her, will stow two tons to her one."

"Maybe so. But let your old tub start from the West Indies with fruit, as they say she is to do, and she'd never get in with a quarter she loaded with. 'Twould all rot on the voyage. The new clipper'd make three trips to your one."

"Not if I had a gale o' wind ahind o' me!" persisted the other.

"They say she walked right away from the revenue-cutter coming up the bay!" remarked another captain, chipping in.

"It'll not be the last time she walks away from revenue-cutters, I'll bet!" decided the second speaker. "She'll bring better goods than fruit to this coast, you bet, and there'll be scant duty paid on 'em, too. Old man Monk hasn't got his millions in these few years sellin' rum and keepin' tavern."

"The more credit to him. I believe in free trade and sailors' rights!" proclaimed the youngest man at the table. "These cursed revenue sharks and high duties are the biggest curse we sailor-men have to contend with. They force freights up and wages down—that's what they do. If I had it in my power I'd sink every sneakin' cutter that flies her stripes up and down!"

"Hush! There goes old man Monk. I'll bet a cookie he heard what we said!" whispered Peters.

"I don't care if he did. I'll never shrink from speakin' my mind and I don't care who hears it!" retorted the younger captain, who hailed from New London.

And he glanced at the form of the Hunchback as it vanished into the sitting-room behind the bar.

"He looked right at you, as if he'd look you through and through, when he passed," added Peters. "He must have heard what you said about the sneakin' cutters!"

"All right. I'll bet two to one he agrees with me, if he did!" averred the New London man.

His name was Barnacle and he owned half the fishing-smack he commanded.

He looked rather uneasy a minute later, when a waiter touched him on the shoulder and said: "Mr. Monk sent me to ask you to come inside a few minutes. He wishes to see you on business!"

But Barnacle was fearless as he was frank, and rose and followed the waiter at once.

"I'll bet he gets an overhauling from the old man for talkin' so careless-like!" said Peters. "Them revenue men has their spies a-snoopin' around all the time, and many an honest man gets into trouble afore he knows what it's for."

It was not more than ten minutes before young Barnacle was back. He wore a very happy look on his weather-bronzed face, and called for drinks for all the party at his own expense.

"You don't look as if you had a funeral near at hand!" remarked Captain Peters.

"Neither do I feel like it. The command of a brand new clipper schooner at double the usual sum o' wages, isn't a thing to cry over, is it?"

"I should say not! You don't mean that you are going to sail the Queen of the Sea?"

"I just do! And I'll clear for St. Kitts and a market inside of a week!"

"Who'll take your smack, then?"

"My brother Ben. He has been first mate two years and knows the Banks as well as I do! Mr. Monk has had his eye peeled for me for some time, and when he saw me to-day thought he'd hire me if he could. I didn't like to leave my own craft and so asked high wages. He agreed to 'em without a word, and I'm booked for a year or longer if I like it!"

"Did he hear what you said about revenue men?"

"I'm not one to tell tales out o' school! If he heard me I guess he didn't r'ile over it!"

That was all they could get out of the young captain, much to the regret of a man, with sharp, ferret-like eyes, who sat alone in a corner near by smoking a pipe, with a slouch hat drawn down over his brow apparently half-asleep.

I say apparently, for there was no man in all that large room so wide awake as he. He was one of that class known as Secret Service men, informers, whose entire lives are in mask.

Already the Queen of the Sea was under surveillance, and the words which Barnacle had used were noted down before the spy left the room, ready to be transferred to the collector of the port, and to be registered against the speaker should he ever be caught in the revenue net.

After Mortimor Monk left the Pewter Mug he was followed, but when he entered his private residence, the spy dared go no further.

When Mortimor Monk entered the sitting-room of his mansion he found Cybele and her cousin De Lorme intently engaged over the chess-board. Both were fine players, and often he had watched their play, frequently giving one or the other a hint when he saw them about to make an indiscreet move.

Now he scarcely glanced at them, but paced to and fro in the room for several minutes, moodily and without speaking.

At last he paused, and glancing at young De Lorme, said:

"I have found a captain for the Sea Queen—one who will obey orders without any repugnance."

"I am glad to hear it, Uncle Mortimor. It will relieve me from one regret, that I could not take her and conscientiously do what you wished me to do."

"Conscience is an excellent excuse. No matter. You will be free to go with that Dutch fur-trader as soon as you like."

"Thank you, uncle."

"No thanks for me. It is not my doing that you leave a good home—that which has sheltered you since you crossed the ocean."

"Why must he leave it, father. I am sure Cousin Alva has always tried to do his best to please you. You have never found fault until now!" said Cybele.

"Pet, do not fret me. He told me yesterday that he was of an age to choose his own course in life. It is true, and I must let him have his own way."

"He will stay and still act as your private secretary, if you desire it, father? I know he is useful in your correspondence."

"Ay, girl—but that is scarcely a man's work. You could do as well as he. And I can see that he longs for a change. I thought a brave command would please him and offered it. You know the result. And now it appears that he would like a trip among the savages of the North. I do not envy him the opportunity!"

"Stay with us, Cousin Alva—stay and assist father as you have done before. We would have a lonely home if you were gone."

"Not if Lieutenant Fontelroy was a frequent visitor!" suggested Monk, with a sneer.

"He will not be a frequent visitor to me," declared Cybele, with an impatient gesture. "He is a nautical dandy, and I take no interest in him. I did not ask him to call again when he was here."

"But I did, dear. The oftener he visits us the less will he be occupied elsewhere. He likes a

glass of old wine passing well, and it may usefully limber his tongue one of these days."

"Ah, well; if he is your visitor it will not fall on me to entertain him, and I am content," answered the fair girl, closing the game by a conquering move which checkmated young De Lorme.

"Beaten! I will retire," he said, with a smile. "It is late!"

When he left the room Mortimor Monk sat down and looked at Cybele in a sad and gloomy way.

"Child," said he, "it seems to me of late as if a change had come over you. You do not care for me as you once did. Have I neglected you in any way? Is there anything you desire which I have not provided?"

"No, father, no! I am sure I have more than I could ask for. I try to prove my gratitude! I do not know what I have done to merit reproach!"

"I do not reprove thee, little girl. I suppose I forget that thou art growing womanly and casting off thy girlish fondness. I will try and not be so exacting. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Will you do it if I ask you, father?"

"Yes, Pet; you know I will."

"Then I have a serious request to make. I have asked it before—but you always put me off! Tell me about the dear mother whom I never saw. Was her name Alice and did she die in 1806?"

"Girl! GIRL! Who has been telling you THIS?" shrieked the millionaire, springing to his feet, his face white as if death-stricken, his form shaking as if in convulsions. "Who? WHO?" he screamed.

And then he fell senseless to the floor.

CHAPTER V.

A SICK MAN'S PROMISE.

TERRIFIED beyond control, Cybele ran screaming to the door of the chamber occupied by her cousin, and in an instant he came to her assistance. Together they re-entered the sitting-room and raised the heavy form of the unconscious man and laid it upon a sofa.

The servants in the rear part of the house had not heard the noise, and young De Lorme decided it would be best to try at once to restore him without any one else knowing what had occurred.

Wine brought from the sideboard was placed at his lips, and a few drops poured into his mouth. Cybele also bathed his head with cold water.

At last, with a gasping sigh, he showed faint signs of recovery, but a full half-hour went by before he spoke, or seemed to know who were there doing their best to restore him.

Then he whispered to Cybele:

"I have been very ill! How was I taken? Has no one been here but you and Alva?"

"No, dear father—no one but us. Ask no questions now. Wait till you are stronger. Shall I send for a doctor?"

"No, child, no! I begin to recollect! I had a horrible dream! You did not call me a murderer, did you? I killed Lord Eggleston in a fair combat! I did on my soul! Though he ruined a happy home and broke two hearts, I gave him every chance!"

"Do not talk, my father! Do not talk. We are asking no questions. Take a little wine and then try to sleep. Alva and I will watch over you!"

She realized that his mind was flighty, his reason for the time under a cloud.

He took a mere sip of wine and closed his eyes. He did not sleep—neither did he seem awake. He had closely verged on a paralytic stroke. All his faculties seemed benumbed.

The young people began to feel serious alarm. A servant was rung for from a distant part of the house and quietly sent for the family physician.

He came, and told them it was none too soon.

According to the practice of that day, he bled his patient freely. Then he had him undressed and put to bed, with mustard on his feet. He gave him a strong sedative and told them to keep watch for any change in the night. If he slept well he would wake weak, but with a clear mind.

The doctor had not asked what brought on the shock. Cybele was glad he did not. For she would not have known what to say.

Only to Alva De Lorme did she reveal all that had occurred—his terrible excitement when she mentioned that name and date.

The doctor took a chamber in the house, so he might be called speedily if he was needed, and Cybele and Alva watched the invalid. Full half the night was gone when their watch began, and, hand clasped in hand, they sat and waited for another day to dawn.

Not until after the sun rose, when the physician was up and present, did the sleeper awake. When he did so he was very weak, but his mind was clear, his memory distinct. With an imploring look on his pale face, he placed his finger on his lips when he saw poor Cybele bending over him.

"Silence!" he whispered. "In good time you

shall know all you would ask. Let me be quiet now!"

She bowed her head gently in assent, and kissed his cold, white brow.

To the doctor he whispered:

"I was overworked, worn out. Strengthen me—it is all I need. Get me on my feet again."

"We will do our best. Keep still and sleep all you can," was the answer.

It was now understood that Alva and Cybele would take turns in watching. No servant was to be trusted alone with the sick man. He might dream, or rave, and speak of secrets which they best could guard. He heard the plan made between them and it pleased him.

Captain Barnacle called during the day for instructions in regard to his new command.

Alva De Lorme told him to go on and see every spar and sail in its place, and to get water, wood and provisions on board to last the crew at least two months. By the time that was done it was to be hoped Mr. Monk would be so far recovered as to tell him in person what else he wished done.

The New London man was content. He knew it would take at least three or four days to stretch the new stays and shrouds—get up the extra booms and upper yards and masts and bend all the sails. Besides another coat of paint outside and in would fit her better for a hot climate, and the provisions had to be chosen and inspected and every water-tank filled.

"When the owner gets better tell him I am not playing sojer; I'll be busy till we sail!" he said when he went out.

Two days and nights went by, and then, on the third day, there came a change for the better. Though his noble face wore a sad and wistful look, Mortimor Monk seemed clear in mind and strong in body.

He took kindly to the nourishment offered to him, and did not complain of any suffering.

"Be patient!" he said to Cybele, when they were alone. "Ask no questions until I am strong enough to answer them. Then you will learn how much I have suffered, how much I have been sinned against, how little I am to blame for what may seem dark to you at first. I will tell you this now—your mother died a natural death and never received any violence at my hands—not even a word of reproach from my lips!"

"I am content, father—I will wait your own time for such explanations as you choose to give!"

"All shall be told ere long, my good child. It is no easy task to one who has striven to forget rather than to cherish bitter memories. And now, Alva, I wish you would go to the counting-room and look over the foreign correspondence. You understand it and the others do not. If it be the will of the Father above, I will soon be able to see to it myself. For years I have tried to bury silent griefs under a press of business or I should have gone mad. Do not think of leaving us, my good nephew. We could not do without you!"

"He will not go, dear father!" assured Cybele. "He has notified Mr. Astor to look for another agent."

The invalid smiled kindly, then closed his eyes and sunk back to rest.

CHAPTER VI.

A SECRET SERVICE PLOT.

THE ferret-eyed Secret Service man went, on the morning after Barnacle was engaged to command the Queen of the Sea, to make a statement to the collector. He showed his notes and gave as his own opinion that the "fruit trade" was to serve only as a cover to a very extensive scheme of smuggling, to be carried on in the new clipper.

"I have long believed that firm engaged in it!" said the collector. "But in no instance can we detect them. Can you not form some plan that will be a success? They never could pay duties and then sell goods at rates thirty, forty and often fifty per cent. less than other importers in the same line!"

"I will try my best, sir! I could ship as a seaman on this clipper and thus get at the bottom of their trade. It would not be a very pleasant job, certainly, but no doubt I can stand it!"

"A good idea. Perhaps you could go as a passenger, recommended by your physician to take a short sea-voyage for your health. You have rather a consumptive look!"

"I acknowledge I am lean built and rather cadaverous in face!" confessed the man, whose name, by the way, was Ebenezer Wilkins. "But I'm afraid the steward would find the consumption of rations my worst disease. I was born with a ravenous appetite, and it makes me lean to carry all I eat!"

The collector laughed. It was quite an original idea to him.

"I'll try the passenger dodge first, for it will be most comfortable!" concluded Wilkins. "I'll do that in disguise, as a gentleman. If the captain declines to take passengers, as I have an idea he will, I will try to ship as a seaman. One voyage out and back will not kill me, and success will bring its reward!"

"Surely so!" the collector decided.

At this moment Lieutenant Fontelroy acting commandant of the cutter Washington, was announced.

"Stay here, Mr. Wilkins," ordered the collector. "I had sent for him to confer on this very matter before you came in. He may have some ideas that will serve you in your work!"

The officer entered and saluted his superior.

"Good-morning, lieutenant," said the latter. "I sent for you to hold a conference in regard to smuggling. Despite the energy of our officers, it is *certain* that a large quantity of goods get into this port without paying duty. I am complained of in Washington, as neglectful, by merchants who pay duty and are undersold by others who must evade it!"

"I can only say, sir," replied the officer, "that we on the cutter are on the alert and allow nothing suspicious to pass without a careful search!"

"You are aware that a new and very fast vessel has been launched by the man who is known as the Hunchback Millionaire—one Mortimor Monk?"

"Yes, sir, and I tested her speed the day she was launched. She made a trial trip down the bay, and I met her as I came in from a cruise outside. She wore ship and ran up on the same course!"

"With what result?"

"That, under less canvas than we carried, she held her own with us. Under all sail, and in good trim, she will prove the fastest vessel of the two."

"That is not very flattering to us."

"No, sir—but it is the truth."

"Well, Mr. Fontelroy, she is going ostensibly to enter the fruit trade, between this port and the West India Islands. I feel certain that smuggling will be her real business. I shall look to you and Mr. Wilkins, here, who is in the Secret Service, to detect and capture her."

"I will do my best, sir. I have never yet been charged with neglect of duty. I will keep a bright lookout for her, and if she comes into port with goods not on invoice and manifest, she will be smartly handled."

"All right, sir. To be forewarned, is to be forearmed. Mr. Wilkins has some plans under way. When he has settled on them he will call on you, and between you, you can arrange a code of signals for night or day use, which can be understood by both."

"All right, sir. He will find me on board when in port," said the officer. "Have you any further orders for me?"

"None, sir. Good-morning!"

"On board, when not visiting Miss Cybele Monk, with whom he is slightly infatuated!" remarked Wilkins, with a smile, after the officer left. "He did not, when speaking of the race, between Monk's clipper and his vessel, tell you of a romantic incident that occurred. The lady I speak of fell overboard. Her cousin leaped into the water to save her, and the lieutenant gave his vessel up in the wind, all aback, and lowered a boat and went in person to the rescue. And he carried her on board the clipper and staid there near an hour. And the next evening he visited her in the Monk mansion on Beekman street. A case of heart-disease on first sight, I'm thinking!"

The collector laughed.

"You Secret Service men keep well posted!" he said.

"It is our duty, sir! If we did not, our discoveries would be few and far between. I have a man in his boat's crew who reports his every action. If he should trip, you would soon hear of it!"

"I suppose it is right, but it seems harsh to have a spy upon one's actions. Even the Custom-house is not exempt from surveillance, I presume."

"Of course not, sir. But those who may be watching your course, and that of those under you, report at Washington, while *my* duty is only to report to you!"

"Comfortable! The thought that spies are all around!" muttered the collector. "It might be expected in a land governed by tyranny—but in a land professing freedom and a Government by the people, it is an anomaly!"

"Rather say, good sir, that there is no Government more exacting than that of the people. In a monarchy only a few dare to criticize official actions. In a republic every man is a censor and the people exercise their power to the fullest extent. An angel could not escape censure, or expect unlimited praise."

"You are right!" assented the collector, with a sigh. "One is hardly well seated in office before the headsman heaves in sight and the cry is raised for his official decapitation. Never mind; we will try to do our duty, Mr. Wilkins, no matter who howls!"

"Of course, sir. I will now see about that passage. If I cannot go as passenger or send a man in that capacity, we must manage to make *one*, in the crew. With sharp work we will have that clipper in the revenue service. There is an act of confiscation which takes vessel and cargo!"

"Certainly, sir. Go ahead and good fortune attend you!"

"Thank you, sir. I will try to merit it."

The spy took his leave, and within an hour after, a pale man, with a bad cough, green spectacles over his eyes and his throat muffled up in a silk handkerchief, was seen going on board the Queen of the Sea to interview the captain.

CHAPTER VII.

THE NIGHT HAWKS AT HOME.

IN a low, one-story house, or cottage, close by the water-side on the East River, north or rather northeast of the settled part of the city, a party of men were assembled one evening, shortly after the day which opens our story. They were seven in number, the most of them young, muscular and active—one only being an elderly person.

His grizzled beard and hair, as well as the furrows on a pale, resolute-looking face, spoke of at least three-score years—yet his almost gigantic form showed power and vigor full as great as that of any of the younger men.

He was addressed by the others as captain, though he had neither a military look, nor yet the appearance of a seafaring person.

They were a rough-looking set, varying in dress, some seeming like longshoremen. Others a little more pretentious in appearance and dress.

"Cap'n!" said one of the last, a tall fellow with fiery red hair and a smooth, florid face, "the boys are getting uneasy. We haven't made a strike worth speaking of in the past six months. If we were back in London there wouldn't be a day without some lucky hit!"

"Reddy, to my mind they wouldn't be half so uneasy if they hadn't a chronic growler like you among 'em. You forget the difference between New York and London. One is an old city rolling in wealth. The other is a new town in a new world comparatively, and silver plate and gold coin are hard to find. But there is wealth here and with patience we may strike it, and strike it heavy, too. I have a plan and soon I may be able to put you all to work on it, which will stake the crowd, give us all a fortune. But it can't be laid out in a day or a week. You have all heard of the Hunchback Millionaire?"

"Ay, ay! What of him?"

"He is the richest man in the city. The great fur-trader, Astor, stands next. I have been spotting both of them for weeks trying to learn where they keep wealth which we could handle!"

"Which we *will*, captain, if you give us the word!" declared Reddy.

"Be patient, men. My girl, 'Lize, is off on that lay, now. For two weeks she has been out at service, proud as you all know she is!"

"That means *business*!" snuffled one of the men, who had lost the greater part of his nose in some affray, and therefore had his speech strangely impaired.

"Ah! the signal!" warned the chief.

A dash of gravel-stones against the closed window-shutter of the room, followed by three sharp raps at the front door, was the signal they heard.

"Go to the door, Reddy. 'Ware Hawks! Look through the wicket and know who you open to."

"Ay, cap'n; no fear of my lettin' in anything foul!"

The man left the room, but first looked at a pistol which he drew from an inner pocket in his pea-jacket to see if it was primed and ready for use.

In less than a minute he returned with a tall, fine-looking girl, of twenty or twenty-five years, by her looks, who embraced and kissed the captain when she entered, addressing him as father.

She was dressed neatly but plainly, and bore herself like a lady, despite her surroundings.

"Well, 'Lize, what news? We are all here, you see, and growling for something to do."

"Where's Jimmy the Weasel? He is not here," she remarked as her dark eyes flashed over the party.

"Oh, the kid is out on some lay of his own. He is the busiest chap in the gang—always on the hunt," answered Reddy.

"It's a pity there isn't more like him in the band!" and the girl gave a glance of scorn at the men. "You growl because you've nothing to do, and leave others to lay out your work. I've got a lay ahead, but it isn't ready to yet. I know where there's a good haul of silver plate, but I can't locate the old man's shiners yet. And when you crack the crib I'm piping, you want to make a clean grab. There's money and jewels—no end of 'em, but I can't get to their stowage yet. If I can get the lady's maid shipped, I'll take her place, I reckon. Then 'twill be plain sailing."

"Has she got a lover?" asked the man with the mutilated nose.

"No, Snuffles. Do you want to try for the posish?" asked the girl in a sarcastic tone.

"No, Miss 'Lize; I'm not cut out for courtin'. Reddy here is the dandy; he can go in and win on that lay!"

"Not much. The girl is red-headed herself, and I never knew one red-head like another. A

lover isn't what is wanted in her case. A dose of ratsbane would get her out of the way the quickest. And she'll get it, some rainy night. She is always snooping in the cupboard, and she may eat a cold bite too much when she least thinks of it. I'm in the chambermaid line now, and the next step would be where she is. Old Monk likes *me*—because I'm English. He hates this country, though he has made all his money here. His girl, Miss Cybele, is so carried away with love for a cousin of hers, that anybody can suit her, if one only waits on her when she bids them."

"Does the old bloke ask any questions—whether you've got any relations or not?" asked her father.

"He did; but when I wiped my eyes on my apron and told him I was a poor orphan, and didn't know a soul this side o' the big fish-pond, I took him right down."

"Poor child," he said. "Don't cry. You shall have a good home here as long as you want it." I had a good mind to try a bit o' gratitude and kiss him—he's a widower you see—but I looked at that horrid hump and caved in. If I got him in love with me he might ask me to marry him. I'd like to marry his money—but I couldn't stand that hump!"

The "boys" laughed, but the face of the captain wore a gloomy look.

"You'll never marry, 'Lize, while I live!" he remarked. "There *may* be a man good enough for you, somewhere. But I've not touched his palm!"

'Lize smiled. Her great brown eyes wore a world of loving light as she laid her small hand on his shoulder and said:

"Don't have a fear o' losin' *me*, father. I told mother on her dyin' bed I'd never leave you, and I never will till one or both of us go to meet her!"

"Bless you, girl!—bless you. Ah, what is that?"

The window-shutter signal came, and then a thin piping voice squeaked out:

"Open the door, quick! The cops are after me!"

The girl sprang to the door as the father cried out:

"It's the Weasel, and he's in trouble!"

A second scarcely had passed, when a mere elf of a boy rushed in, closely followed by the girl.

The boy was bareheaded, his long yellow hair streaming over his bare neck and shoulders. His coat and shirt had been torn almost off. His face had a white, scared look, and as he held his right hand up all could see that it was covered with blood.

"I've no time to blab. Hide me quick! A cop necked me, to take me in for liftin' a ticker—here it is—and I *knifed* him bad! Guess he'll never neck nobody else!"

He pulled a gold watch and chain from a pocket with his left hand and handed it to the captain, while he spoke.

"Hide me, I say! There were a dozen men a-chasin' me when I broke up the road to get here!"

"Down, all of you, but Reddy and 'Lize! Down to the vault! If the search grows hot, you can get to the boat!"

The captain moved a table as he spoke and Snuffles pulled up a corner of carpet and raised a well-concealed trap-door.

In a second the boy and every man in the party but Reddy and the captain went out of sight.

"The cards, 'Lize: a bottle o' rum and two glasses! Quick, lass! I hear the sound of men on a run! You 'tend the door and open to any that come. I'll see to the rest!"

In a few seconds, a bottle of rum and two glasses, half filled, were on the table, which had been put back in its place above the trap, and a pack of greasy old cards was being shuffled and dealt by Reddy as the two men sat face to face on each side of the table.

Each man had taken a swallow of rum when a thundering knock was heard at the door.

"Open here and in a hurry! Open in the name of the law!" cried a stern voice.

Without hesitating 'Lize opened the door, and a half-dozen men rushed in, two of them in police uniform.

The latter glanced at the two men playing cards so quietly, with half-emptied glasses before them, and looked around the room eagerly, but saw no sign of anything out of the way.

'Lize had taken a half-knitted stocking and a ball of yarn and needles from her pocket and threw them on the table by the lamp, and placed a chair near ere she went to the door.

"The boy—the boy murderer—where can he have gone to? Are there none but you three in this house?" demanded one of the officers as soon as he could get to breathing naturally. They were all nearly breathless from running.

"We three are all. What d've mean by boy murder? Has any boy been killed?" asked the old captain laying his hand of cards, face down on the table and looking up at the men with an expression of inquiry and surprise.

"A boy has murdered one of the best men on our force!" answered the officer. "He ran up this way—we were close on his heels, but he

dodged us in the darkness. We thought he might have come here to hide!"

"Here? I'd have you to know, sir, that I'm a law-abiding man;—no one can say a word ag'in' old Tom McCord. As to boys, there's not been anything younger than my gal's sweetheart here inside o' my door since I lived here. This is the last place a *murderer* would come to, for I'd grip and hold him with my own hands for you, if he tried it. Wouldn't I, Jim?"

"I reckon so, and I'd help you," answered Reddy. "Don't forget that hearts is trumps, boss!"

"Have you a lantern in the house? There's rocks and bushes all about. The little scamp may be in hiding close by," suggested the second officer.

"I never owned a lantern—never go out o' nights. Jim here works on the docks and boards with me an' my daughter, and when he gits in he's too tired to go out. We have supper and a sup or two o' rum an' sometimes a game, and then we turn in."

"There's no use in our losing time here," said the first officer. "We're off the track, and I'm afeard we'll never get on it again—not at least till daylight."

"One minute, Bevins, and I'll go!" said the second officer. Then turning to the old captain he said:

"Most like there'll be a big reward out for the boy. If you see him lurking around, nab him and bring him to the chief down at the City Hall, and you'll be paid."

"Good! I'll catch him if I can. But how 'll I know him? What does he look like?"

"A regular little devil, with long yellow hair and black, snaky eyes!" answered one of the citizens, who came with the officers. "Not more than ten or a dozen years old, if so much!"

"And he—a young boy like that, killed a man—an officer? It seems *impossible*," cried 'Lize, shuddering.

"He *did*, young woman. He snatched a watch and chain from the fob of my friend, Captain Barnacle, and started to run out of the Pewter Mug with it. An officer grabbed him right at the door and he stabbed him to the heart and tore loose from his grip when he fell. And though a dozen of us went in chase and almost had him three or four times, and we got these officers started, he is free yet. But we can't stop here. I'll never rest till I see the little wretch caught and hung!"

The officers and men now left, not a suspicion against that house in their minds.

CHAPTER VIII.

TRANSFORMING THE WEASEL.

'LIZE took a candle and lighted them to the door and held it up for them to continue their search by its light till a gust of wind blew it out.

Then she locked the door and went back to the table and sat down to her knitting. She did not know, or her father, either, but there might be some one left on the watch, who might get a squint inside if anything of a change was made.

"That kid beats me," remarked the captain in a low tone. "I knew he was close kin to Old Nick, but I didn't think he had the grit to knife a cop rather than go in quod. He throws all the rest of the Night Hawks in the shade, young as he is!"

"He'll give us trouble, father. He was seen plainly by so many in that big tavern that he'll never be forgotten. Them snake eyes and that yellow hair—how plain that chap described him. The sooner he is got out of the country the better it will be for him and us, too!"

"You're square there, 'Lize; but it'll not be easy when every cop and hundreds more, itching to get the reward, will be on the lookout!"

"Bosh! I'll cut that yellow hair close to the scalp and put a curly head of raven tresses in its place. A nice girl's dress, after soap and water has whitened him up a little would change him so even *you* wouldn't know him if you didn't hear him squeak."

"'Lize, you are a queen on plans! When do you have to go back to your place?"

"Early to-morrow. I got leave to spend the night with my dressmaker, you see—so I can't be long away."

"And you'll fix the Weasel before you go?"

"Yes, before I sleep. I'll take the things down into the vault and do it there. The men had better stay there till there's no searchin' going on around here as there will be in the morning!"

"Level again! You're a master-hand at thinkin', my girl. We'll keep on a-playin' till you're all ready, then we'll douse the glim, and you can go below and fix the kid up. He'll not like it, but when he knows he can't save his neck any other way, he'll give in!"

'Lize relighted her candle, and yawning, as if she felt sleepy, went up to the chamber which she always occupied when at home.

It took her some time to make her preparations. She was delayed some by frequent visits to her window to look out. The searching parties had secured lanterns somewhere, and

were scanning every rock and bushy spot along the river.

She put out the light after she had got the articles together which she needed for the disguise. Then she watched until satisfied that the officers had left that neighborhood and had gone further up the island in their search.

Going down-stairs, she bade her father put out his lamp before he raised the trap. Then, leaving him and Reddy on guard in darkness, up-stairs, she went below.

Down a ladder, which could be removed, she went into a yawning pit of darkness, nearly twenty feet, with a bundle under her arm.

Passing on a few yards she reached an iron door. Seven times, slow and distinct, an interval between each blow, she struck this door, with a heavy ring she wore on her forefinger.

"Who flies?" asked a low voice on the other side of the door.

"The Queen of the Night Hawks. Open!"

The door flew open, and in a lighted vault furnished with a table, stools and even beds and bedding, as well as provisions, the five men and the boy were seen.

The latter had washed the blood from his hand, and his face was not now so pale and full of terror as it had been when he came in above.

"Has the cops been in a-lookin' arter me?" he asked.

"Yes, and there's a crowd searching all over the island for you yet, with lanterns!"

"Blast 'em! They can't find me, *now*! I'm all hunky in here!"

"Yes. And do you want to stay here till you mold and die?"

"Not much, 'Lize! And I *won't*, either!"

"How will you help yourself?"

"I don't know. But I *must*! I'd die if I couldn't get out into fresh air, and run, and squeal, and keep my hand in a-priggin' things!"

"There will be a big reward out for you by morning, dead or alive. They've got your description down to a dot. You couldn't go two squares outside as you are now and not be nabbed!"

"That's nice to go to sleep on! Can't you tell me some more like it?"

"Yes; you killed your man *dead*—stabbed him to the heart, and if you're caught you'll hang for it!"

"Dad went that way. They say it don't hurt much."

"Do you want to try it?"

"Not much, cully—not *much*!"

"I can save you, if you'll do just as I wish."

"Blab! If 'tisn't too hard to do, I'll work any trick you lay out for me!"

"First I must cut off your hair—have it shaved close!"

"That won't kill me. In hot weather it'll be nice."

"I shall fit and fasten on tight to your skin a black wig of long curly hair. Then I shall wash you as clean as I can, and powder you up a little, and dress you in a nice suit of girl's clothes!"

"Blamed if you will! *Me*—the only Night Hawk that has killed his man, me playing off gal! Not much o' that in mine! No, *ma'am*!"

"Then you can go right out, give yourself up and be hung!"

"We'd better squelch him, right here!" growled one of the men. "He might squeal on us, when the rope was around his neck. If he won't listen to reason and let you fix him up and save him, we are fools to let him get us into trouble!"

"Job Sackett—I'd die before I'd squeal on the gang!" cried the boy, tears in his eyes. "And you know it. If I was a man I'd lick you! Go on, 'Lize; fix me up just as you want to. I'll not kick now. I'd 'most as soon die—but I'll do what you an' the cap'n thinks best. He sent you to do it, didn't he?"

"Yes, Jimmy!"

"Then go ahead. I'll never whimper!"

Aided by Snuffles, who had a case of razors in his pocket, the long yellow hair was soon shorn from the round bullet head of the elfish boy. Then he was thoroughly washed. It was hard, but he bore it. The dressing part was accomplished with a great deal of difficulty. The boy-spirit rebelled against it. But it was finally done.

And the elfish, almost fiendish-looking lad could never have been recognized in the new garb. His very shame gave a mild expression to his face, and his eyes were so cast down by mortification that their snake-like look was seen no more. In truth, there were tears in them when he said:

"I feel just like a poor, miserable fool! But don't none of you *laugh* at me! I carry *this* yet, and blamed if I don't use it on him that laughs at me!"

He took up the knife, which he had cleansed after coming into the vault, the keen blade which had wrought death in the Pewter Mug, and concealed it inside the bosom of the dress.

The men all promised to respect his feelings, and the little imp cooled down.

"What's my name to be?" he asked.

"Mary is a good name: you will be called Mary. And for fear you will be discovered by

your sharp piping voice, which you cannot disguise, you are to play deaf and dumb!"

"That's jolly! I've done it more'n once when I wanted to fool some bloke that I thought would give me something. I know all the signs—can talk with my fingers like the best of 'em!"

"Then in this disguise we can take care of you easy until we can get a chance to send you off where you will be safe—back to England, maybe."

"I won't go! I'm a sworn Night Hawk! And here I stay as long as the band lives. You hear me! And I *mean* that. I'll play gal, be deaf and dumb, but I'll never, *never* leave the band!"

"Well, we will not send you off against your will. But, remember, if ever you *are* detected and arrested here, *we* couldn't save you!"

"I know the risk, and I'll run it. If I'm found out, it's *my* funeral, and I'll die game, and I'll not die in gal's clothes, either! Do you want me to go up and see the cap'n? If you *do*, go on ahead and tell him he mustn't laugh at me!"

"I'll not take you up to-night. You had all best turn in down here, for the officers and others are on the search yet and may come in again. We've fooled 'em nicely so far—and it is best not to run any risks."

"All right," was the answer.

And 'Lize started to rejoin her father.

She went up to the upper room, the trap was closed and the table replaced, then the lamp was relighted and she told her father what had occurred below. She had scarcely finished when, without any warning, or even the sound of footsteps outside, a loud knocking resounded on the outer door.

CHAPTER IX.

OLD HAYS.

"THUNDER! I don't like *that*! Go, 'Lize; you opened before. Go and ask who is there. Say we're just goin' to bed, and don't like bein' disturbed. We've been worried before to-night. Me and Reddy have done playin', but the cards are here all the same."

This was what the captain, who called himself Tom McCord, said in a low tone, when the last loud knocking startled them.

'Lize hurried to the door.

"Who knocks?" she asked. "We're not used to bein' disturbed at night. Who are you and what do you want?"

"Open the door and you'll see!"

The answer came in a sharp, imperious voice.

"Not till I know who you are. I'll call my father and our boarder. You needn't think that there is only a *woman* here!" cried 'Lize.

"Pshaw! We are officers and have been here before to-night."

"Why didn't you say so then, and not scare a poor girl half to death. I was afraid you were river-thieves!"

And she threw the door open at once.

Three officers entered. Two *had* been there before. The third was a slender man, with keen gray eyes, who wore an official badge on his breast.

"These are the parties we interviewed, Mr. Hays," announced the first officer, "and as I told you, we found the girl at her knitting work and the two men playing cards and taking a quiet glass!"

"We'd got through and were just goin' to bed," said the old man.

"Well—we'll not keep you long. We just stopped in to tell you *we have found the boy*!" said the gray-eyed man, keeping his eyes fixed on the face of the old man, as if he would look him through.

"Have you? Where is he? I'd like to see the *murderin' cuss*!" cried old Tom, his face expressing pleasure if anything.

"We sent him on ahead! You can see him in court in the morning at ten o'clock, or earlier if you come to my office in the City Hall. Ask for the chief of police!"

"Thankee! I'll go down sure. I s'pose he is skeered a'most to death, isn't he?"

"No. He is a hardened little sinner! But we'll not keep you up, old man. Good-night, all!"

The ruse had failed. The keenest officer in New York had met a man as cool as himself. Had the captain shown the slightest sign of agitation or excitement, Mr. Hays would have searched the house from top to bottom, satisfied that the former had an interest in the boy who had done the fearful deed. And Tom McCord had seen through his plan the instant he spoke, for he knew the boy had *not* been captured. If he had the officers would not have reentered his house.

"You surely will not go down to the City Hall, father! It may be a trap for you!"

"I surely *will* go, 'Lize. If I *don't* they'll suspicion something is wrong and that I wasn't in earnest in what I said. Hays is worse than a bloodhound on a trail. He was the first man I was warned against when we came over. Only a bold face will throw *him* off the scent. Now the sooner we're all abed and the lights out the better. We'll be up early and lay our plans."

"All right, father. I'll think mine over be-

fore I sleep. I've got to be in Beekman street early, or I may get the bounce. They have discipline in that house. The old man is under the weather, now—overworked they say. I haven't seen him this two days. And I miss it, too, for he always speaks a kind word when he sees me!"

"Don't get soft on him, child!"

"No fear of that, father. He is as old as you are, and that hump! It's just horrid. I've never known any love but that given to my dear mother and you—neither do I expect to. I'm not cast in a loving mold."

Laughing lightly, she took a candle and went to her chamber.

McCord and Reddy retired to a double-bedded room on the lower floor, and for some time talked in a low tone about the act of the boy—so much beyond his years.

"I'm afraid, if we don't get him out of the country he'll give us more trouble," said the captain. "He has the temper of a tiger. When he gets mad, he goes fairly crazy!"

"That's so. He is a wildcat when he gets on a racket. I wish the cop had knocked his brains out, before he went under. The boy is a danger to us. This is the first time a cop ever entered our crib!"

"True, and I fear 'twill not be the last. I didn't care a fig about the first two who came—but that Hays is a born sleuth-hound. Where others can't see a shadow he takes up a clew and goes ahead on it. And he is the only man on the force that I dread. If my eye had not met his, or if even my lip had quivered when he tried his little game, he'd have smelt a rat. I sized him up the first second he was inside—the instant I heard his name. There isn't a man on the cross in town that don't fear him!"

"And he isn't much of a man, either—not half your weight!"

"Steel and whalebone, though, what there is of him. 'Lize don't count in a chap of his make!"

"It's a wonder some crook don't lay him out! He is mortal, isn't he?"

"I suppose so; but some men are hard to get at. And he is one of 'em. I heard of him before I crossed over, and now I've seen him. I think he is hard to beat. The less we see of him the better for us. But, good-night; I've got to sleep or I'll feel worse than a sick dog in the morning!"

All was now quiet in the nest of the Night Hawks.

CHAPTER X.

A SWABBER SPY.

MORTIMOR MONK was on his feet again. But he was not well in mind or body. With strong will-force, he moved about, went to his counting-room and tried once more in the whirl of business to forget. Tried, ah, how vainly! Memory has the tenacity of life. Be the past dark or bright, it cannot be suppressed. It will rise to confront us.

After giving instructions to Alva De Lorme in regard to answering some of his foreign letters, he took his seat in the carriage which his weakness compelled him to use and had it driven down to his private dock in the shipyard. He wished to see how nearly ready for sea his new captain had got. He found Barnacle on board, busy in the stowage of his last water-casks and in getting a final pull on the shrouds and stays.

Busy though he was, Barnacle had a sad and gloomy look in his face.

"Are you not well?" asked the millionaire, in a kind tone.

"All right in bodily health, sir, but a trifle worried in mind," was the answer. "A little p'izen brat of a boy stole a gold watch and chain that cost me a hundred and fifty hard-earned dollars. I don't mind that loss so much, but it cost the life of a brave, good man, an efficient officer, who leaves a widow and three little children to mourn their loss. He tried to arrest the boy as he was running off, and the little wretch drove a knife hilt-deep in his heart!"

"Horrible! When did this occur?"

"Last night, sir—at the Pewter Mug, where I went to take a lunch and meet some old friends!"

"At the Pewter Mug? My own house? I had not heard of it; in truth I have not seen a paper this morning. Did they catch the murderer?"

"No, sir; he got off with the watch. There is a reward of one thousand dollars offered for his arrest, this morning—five hundred by the mayor and as much more by the chief of police."

"A boy did this?"

"Yes, sir; the little brat did not look to be over ten years old. He was selling apples from a basket, doing well, for he told a pitiful tale about his sick daddy at home that needed his earnings for food and medicine, and we bought all he had at his own price. He then asked me what time it was and I took my watch out to see. He grabbed it and ran for the door. There he was met by the policeman who collared him. Quicker than thought he struck him with a knife or dagger, tore away and escaped!"

"A widow and three orphan children made, in a minute, desolate?"

"Yes, sir; it makes me heavy-hearted to think of it!"

"Have you pen and ink in the cabin?"

"Yes, sir. I opened a log-book, the day I took command. I note everything connected with the schooner in it. It will always tell you what has occurred on board—what duty has been done, how the wind and weather runs, and so on."

"A good idea, Captain Barnacle. Come with me into the cabin."

The young captain obeyed.

The millionaire sat down at the table, took an order book from his pocket and wrote out two orders on his cashier at the house on Pearl street.

One was for one hundred and fifty dollars, payable to Captain Barnacle.

The other was for five hundred dollars, payable to bearer.

"Buy yourself a watch and chain as good as that you lost!" said Mr. Monk. "Take the other order to the widow of the murdered policeman, and say I feel sorry for her in this dark hour of her distress. This is a slight proof of it!"

"Mr. Monk, I don't know whether you call yourself a Christian or a church man, or not; but there are few that do who can prove by their good acts so good a right to a place among the chosen up above. I'm a poor man, but I shall put another hundred with your gift. I thank you for making me able to do it, for I should have had to use the money to buy a watch with. I always need a watch to time my lunar observations by at sea."

"How nearly ready are you to take in cargo?"

"All ready now, sir. What will we load with?"

"Staves and headings for sugar casks! It is a clean cargo, light and easy to handle. Report at my counting-room, and the general manager will give you directions. Before you sail come to me for final instructions!"

"I will, sir."

"Have you all the men you want?"

"Yes, sir; shipped the last one to-day. He didn't claim to be a very good seaman, nor ask top wages. So I took him, for I've found as a general thing that the men who brag most turn out the poorest stock. His name is Wilkins. It is entered on my log as well as on the muster roll. I had a chance to take a passenger, but without you order it, I shall not bother with any!"

"You are right, sir. But how came a passenger to offer when the vessel is not up for a port yet?"

"He said he didn't care where we were going; his doctor said he must take a sea-voyage. I told him to go to some of the regular packets that made a business of carrying passengers, and that ended it."

"You did right, sir—very right. Passengers are not profitable, and sometimes are in the way when they're not wanted! You can post the vessel for Jamaica and a market. You'll leave your cargo there and go to St. Kitts in ballast!"

"It'll be hot as blazes down there, sir!"

"Yes, but your stay will be short. My consignees will hurry up matters for you. They know beforehand just what I want put on board and how to do it. You will read all in your written instructions, which I will give you the last thing before you sail!"

A face at the skylight above gleamed as with satisfaction—the face of the last shipped sailor. Neither the millionaire nor his captain knew of this surveillance.

"All right, sir. Hallo! Where in thunder did that come from?"

A tarpaulin hat fell through the open skylight above and dropped on the table.

"Beg pardon, sir; I was a-swabbin' off the cabin trunk, sir, and stumbled and my hat went off. Please toss it up to me."

It was Wilkins, the new man, who spoke. And he lied. He had been leaning over the skylight listening to what was said below when a gust of wind tipped his hat off. He did have a wet swab in his hand as an excuse for work there if any one caught him while thus "eavesdropping."

He had begun Secret Service work early, and the good of it for him was that no one on board had the least suspicion of his true character.

Yet that very night the collector of the port received a verbatim report of the conversation held between Captain Barnacle and Mortimer Monk.

Weary with his efforts, the millionaire now took a carriage for home, where he found his daughter in a state of considerable anxiety. Her maid had been taken very sick—a sudden fit of violent vomiting and great pain. The family doctor had been called, and questioning her, found she had eaten very heartily of some lobster salad left in the pantry and he laid it to that. He thought her sickness would be brief, but found it hard to master immediately.

"Take Eliza, the English girl, in her place until your maid is well," said her father. "She is a good girl, I think, from the little I have seen

of her. And she is from our own native land an orphan, and needs what kindness we can offer."

Thus it was, that Eliza McCord—the "Lize" of the Night Hawks—got where she could begin to investigate the secrets of the mansion.

As the salad was thrown away into the refuse barrel as soon as the doctor pronounced the indigestible stuff the cause of the maid's sickness, no one had the chance, if they had the desire, to investigate the contents of the dish or try any more of it.

CHAPTER XI.

"OLD HAYS" INTERVIEWS THE CAPTAIN.

NINE o'clock had struck at St. Paul's—the old church which stood like a grim sentinel in front of the City Hall Park, and had been registered by the great clock over the City Hall as well, when Tom McCord, dressed up in the best he had, and looking like a retired sea-captain, entered the basement of the City Hall and asked a uniformed policeman where he would find the "chief."

"Corner room—there to the right!"

And the man pointed the way with his locust. He was one of those grim guardians of the law who never wasted words.

"Thankee!"

And the captain at once proceeded to the office occupied by the dreaded chief.

He found the latter at his desk, busily engaged in writing. Tom took off his hat when he entered and brushed back his bushy gray hair with his hand, while he waited for a recognition.

The chief looked up, and a grim smile lighted up his stern face, as he spoke:

"So, you are here?"

"What there is of me!" McCord returned.

"Can you read?"

"Well, yes—though I have to use spec's, but I forgot 'em, I left home so early."

"This is big print—maybe you can make it out without glasses."

The chief handed him a hand-bill about a foot square headed:

"ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS' REWARD."

McCord knew those gray eyes were watching every expression in his changing face, and that he had a man before him hard to deceive. But he was cool as an iceberg.

He read the heading easily, and then, more slowly and with what appeared like difficulty, got through the rest of the bill, reading aloud the reward offered for the murderer of officer Gleason, the description of the boy following.

"What is this for, when you've got the boy?" he asked with well-assumed voice and look of surprise.

"We have not got the boy."

"Why, you said you had, last night. I came down a purpose to see him. You told me I could."

"The boy we had was not the right one. He proved an alibi, and his father took him home, a half-hour ago!"

"Then I've had my long walk for nothing!"

"Maybe not. If you are smart and in luck you may get that reward."

"I'd like to know what chance an old man like me has! I never go 'round much, and if I was to see a chap that was smart enough to do what this one has, I'd be afraid to touch him, for fear I'd get hurt too!"

"A giant like you, afraid of a mite of a child? Not much. That is too thin!"

"I was thinkin' of his knife. I'd hate to have a dig from that. A thousand dollars—hey? That's big money. More'n I expect to see while I live. I'm sorry you haven't got the chap—I'd like to see him. Old as I be, I've never seen a real murderer but once and he was the son of an English lord. He killed his man and got away, was never heard of afterward. My father was a game-keeper on the estate and I was a sort of under helper. I'll never forget seeing the dead man with a hole through his heart wide enough to put three fingers in!"

"This was in England?"

"Yes—twenty years ago, when I was young and fresh. Father died the very next year. That's one thing I remember the time by! I knew all the parties well, by sight. If the young man hadn't done what he did, he would have been a lord in a couple o' years, for his father died and he was the only son and heir. A cousin of his came into it after awhile, when news came that the young lord that should have been had been killed—it was in India, if I remember. It made a great stir, I know, then!"

"Well, I have but little time to spare. What is your name?"

"McCord, sir—Tom McCord!"

"Well, McCord, take a half-dozen of these handbills with you and scatter them up your way. If you hear anything, or get the least clew to this boy or his hiding-place, let me know, and I'll pay you well!"

"Thankee, sir! I'll keep my eyes open, and my ears, too! Good-morning."

"Good-morning!"

The chief turned to his desk, satisfied now, more than ever, that this plain Englishman knew nothing of the fugitive.

Yet this man Hays was then considered the keenest officer in America.

If he had followed Tom McCord to his home, as he would have done had one shadow of suspicion been aroused, he would not only have earned that reward by finding the boy, but he would have been a witness to a strange scene.

When McCord entered his cottage, which was full a quarter of a mile from the nearest house, he found Reddy, with Jimmy the Weasel in girl apparel, playing cards at the table over the trap.

None of the rest of the gang were in sight. They had been told to keep their place in the vault until he returned from his visit downtown.

McCord quietly laid one of the handbills down where the eyes of both the players could see it.

The Weasel was smart. He could both read and write.

He saw the great letters and figures which headed the paper.

His eyes opened wide and his face grew ghastly white.

"That means me!" he gasped. "And it'll fetch me, too! There's men in the gang would sell me for half that!"

"Fool—when the penalty would be death to him who betrayed you—his throat cut from ear to ear? Have you forgotten the oath?"

"No, cap'n—no; but I believe I'll go crazy in these duds. They make a trembling coward of me!"

"Yet in them only you are safe. As Mary the Mute no one will seek you for harm. 'Lize did the only thing that could be done to save you. And the very shame you feel makes the disguise the more perfect. Can't you see that?"

"I s'pose you're right, cap'n. I do feel meaner than a scalded cat, and I can't help it! But maybe I'll get over that when I can get the hang o' the petticoats!"

"Better them than the hang of poor Jimmy the Weasel!" suggested Reddy, sententiously.

The gang were now allowed to come up from below and to scatter out as usual on their customary expeditions, cautioned not to speak about the reward in the handbills, or to talk of the killing, for fear some word might give a detective a clew to their knowledge of the assassin.

And the Weasel, generally the first out and the last in, had to stay in and try to learn how to walk like a girl in his new rig. It was tough work, for he generally went on the run and jump, whistling, singing or squealing through the streets.

He was a strange boy—hardly human. Reared in crime, born of criminal parents, he knew nothing else. To steal and not be caught was all the glory he sought. Even his last crime was nothing in his eyes, except the danger it brought with it. His success in bringing off the watch he had taken to add to the general treasury of the band was worth more to him than the life he had taken. His father had been a murderer, why should not he follow the same crimson trail?

That was all the philosophy he knew. As to religion—he had none. Like a brute he would live off his surroundings, and die like a brute when his time came.

New York was so small, fifty years ago, that murder attracted a good deal of notice and made considerable excitement—more in a month than than a half-dozen such crimes in a day do now.

And even inside the mansion on Beekman street the servants spoke of it in low voices—it seemed so awful to them. But Eliza McCord had nerve, and though she agreed with the butler and coachman that a murderer should be hung, she argued that a mere child could not have done such a deed from sheer wickedness; he must have been crazy.

The "insanity dodge" in murder cases was not fashionable then, either. She had to say something, and did so.

CHAPTER XII.

THE HAWKS SECURE A PIGEON.

THE Pewter Mug was very popular and usually as full in the daytime as it was at night. But in the day a different class dropped in for lunch and drink. The shipping-clerks and downtown merchants who had business near would run in to get a bite to eat, or a glass of beer or something stronger. But few sat around taking their time at the tables as the old captains and mates did in the long evenings.

On the day after the murder a morbid curiosity among the people kept the place full, and a constant string of questioners bothered the barmaid and her assistants.

Among those who dropped in, Reddy and a companion, dressed a little better than the usual run of longshoremen, entered and called each for a mug of 'alf-and-'alf!

They saw the handbills of reward up and heard comments on every side, but they wisely held their own tongues, and while they enjoyed their ale and a chop, gathered in the ideas of others. They found that the sympathy of the people was strong for the widow and orphans of the murdered man, and it would go

hard with the criminal, child though he was, if once arrested.

During their stay Captain Barnacle came in and told of the generosity of Mortimer Monk to the widow and orphans. Sailor-like, he did not speak of the hundred dollars he gave himself, or of the watch which was to replace the one he had lost.

The two Night Hawks listened to the comments made on the generosity of Mortimer Monk and his great wealth, estimated to be several millions at least. As they knew their leader meant to invest in those millions as soon as he could learn how to get at them, they took a deep interest in all they heard. They cared little about the crime, except as they shared in the value of the theft.

From thence they sauntered down along the docks, watching a chance to pick up something, for it had been dull work for them in a new country ever since they arrived. New York was hardly as great to them as a suburb of the city they had left, and for its size, was far better guarded by the star police.

From a packet—a large ship carrying a flag with a black ball on it at her mast-head, and just in her dock near the Fulton Market, a string of passengers were coming up the pier—most of them walking as if they were groggy, though it was not so. They had endured a long voyage, and had been so long rolling and tumbling about on the sea that they had their sea gait on them yet.

One of these passengers, a young man with a good deal of jewelry in sight on his person, in shape of watch-chain, seals, rings and a huge breast-pin, halted before them and asked to be directed to a good chop and ale-house.

"We knows the very best crib in York—don't we, Sammy?" cried Reddy. "You're from London, I know!"

"I never was hout of it till I was fool enough to cross the Atlantic this time. Been seasick hever since we left Liverpool," replied the stranger.

"Come with us; we're from London, too. We'll show you where to get good pecking and as good drink as there is in York!"

"I can't go werry fast!" protested the other. "The ground seems to 'eave and roll like I was walkin' on the ship."

"Never mind; it's an off day with us and we have plenty of time and glad to show a countryman around. You'll have to keep your eyes peeled in this town. There's sharpers around. Sammy, we'd better go to the "Black Swan"—English George keeps there!"

"Yes, it's an out-and-out good place."

The two "crooks" led the stranger down the street till they came to a narrow lane or alley that led westward and up this till they reached the sign of the Black Swan, and entered an old-fashioned chop-house, with a small bar in one corner, a profusion of round tables, which at that time were not much in use. It was a night house, and a resort for a class whose time for work was at night, and who rested in the daytime.

"What'll you have to eat and drink? It's our treat since you are a new arrival and we've been here over a matter of two years, or thereabouts!"

Reddy was the spokesman and he had a sharp eye for the chances.

"A porter'ouse steak and some 'Olland gin, 'ot, with plenty hof sugar in it!" responded the stranger. "I'm 'ungry as a dog—couldn't heat scarce nothink on the ship, I was that sick!"

Steaks were ordered for the three men and a steaming mug of strong gin-sling for the stranger, while the other two took a simple mug of 'alf-and-'alf. They wanted clear heads, just then.

The stranger warmed up under the potent influence of his gin, and told his name, and gave some other points he had better have kept to himself in that company.

His name was Peter Sludge; he had been first an apprentice and then a clerk in a dry grocer's shop; an uncle had died and left him four thousand pounds and he had made up his mind to travel and see the world; he had put three thousand pounds in bank, and taken one thousand to pay his expenses while he saw the sights to be seen in new countries.

He had his mug of hot gin refilled, and called for 'alf-and-'alf for his entertainers next, and then he began to ply them with questions which they answered in a way to further future aims.

A fat, frowsy-looking woman stood behind the bar and handled the cash. She was the landlady. Her husband, a retired bruiser from the other side, waited on his customers at the table, giving Reddy, whom he knew, a sly wink now and then as the game went on.

The room was decidedly English. The walls were covered with pictures of noted prize-fighters setting-to in the ring, steeple-chases, race-horses and jockeys in red and green. And Mr. Sludge soon felt quite "at 'ome" there, as he said, when he got warmed up on hot gin.

"There's free 'unting hover 'ere, they told me habcard ship. One can shoot deers and pheasants and not be harrested for poaching!"

"That is so, Mr. Sludge," assured Reddy,

and plenty of it close by. Over in Jersey there's any amount of game of all kinds. Deer, elk, and, if you go far enough out—buffalo!"

"My gracious! 'Ow I like to hopen the beyes of my folks in hEngland with 'unting stories! Do you hever 'unt, Mr. Reddy?"

"Oh, yes; Sammy and me go out once in a while and knock over a few stags. We're always luckiest on pigeons, though, aren't we, Sammy?"

"Ay, that we are!" echoed Sammy, ready to burst out laughing. "For he thought how easy it would be to pluck the bird then in hand!"

The burly landlord chuckled over the joke, and insisted on taking his turn to stand treat. He always liked to meet customers from the old country.

Mr. Sludge began to feel pretty happy. He wanted to get his trunk ashore and find a good lodging-place. He wanted to settle down in apartments on shore so he could go on a hunt with his new-found friends and see the sights in New York.

"You haven't been so careless as to leave your money aboard ship in a trunk, have you? Sailors are so light-fingered!"

This was a *feeler*, and uttered by Reddy.

"No hindeed!" cried Mr. Sludge, slapping his trousers pocket with one hand and tapping his breast with the other.

"Fifty sovereigns in gold lay down there, and 'ere I keeps the rest in Bank o' hEngland notes good as gold the world hover!"

"That's sensible! There's nothink like a man knowin' 'ow to take care of hisself!" said the burly landlord. "Old 'oman, trot us out another round o' drinks. It's time you treated, when we're all your countrymen!"

Sludge tried to protest. But it was a feeble effort. The gin was so very sweet he didn't know its strength.

Reddy called for a Welch rarebit on toast for the party, and Sammy warbled a song, and Sludge tried to follow suit.

This fourth mug of gin would have laid Mr. Sludge out, without any doctoring, but there was an object in getting him sound asleep—so sound that he would not wake before night fell. And a hint given by the landlord told the landlady what was wanted, and before that mug of gin reached Sludge it was "fixed." He had not drank much more than half of it before he was oblivious, in a full sense.

"We'll share thirds—I'm not an 'og if I am hEnglish!" announced the landlord. "The old 'oman and me are one!"

Reddy deftly "went through" the unfortunate Sludge, and found nearly the amount he had boasted of having and a good gold watch, besides the other jewelry.

The last-named articles were given to the landlady as her perquisites. Then the money was divided—two-thirds to Reddy and Sammy, and one-third to the landlord.

"How'll we get rid of him? It'll not do to leave him where he'll raise a hue and cry that might put old Hays on our track!" declared Reddy. "And I, for one, don't care to have blood on my hands when it can be helped!"

"No need o' that!" answered the landlord. "There's a ship off in the stream bound to South hAmerica—short of 'ands! Me an' the old 'oman 'll rig 'im hup in sailor's togs, get him haboard as soon as it's dark and get the had-vance! He'll not be sober afore he is hout at sea, and that'll quit us o' trouble!"

"Good! We'll leave it all to you, old man. You're a trump on a good hand, and we'll slide in another fat pigeon the very first chance we get!"

The two Night Hawks, full of glee now, left the Black Swan and started for their quarters to report.

They had made the best haul of the season.

"I wish 'Lize could have seen this 'lay' worked up!" said Reddy to his mate, after they emerged from the alley and headed for the quarters of the Night Hawks. "She is always a-throwing up that we're lazy and can't work a job except she or the old man lays it out for us! And here we grabbed near two-thirds of a thousand pounds sterling in less than two hours and made no fuss over it. What'll she say when she sees the swag?"

"That we've been lucky! She never praises any one," responded Sammy, sullenly.

"Maybe she thinks we'd spoil on praise. She's a high-strung piece. I like her, but it's no use. She cares for nobody but herself and the cap'n! I wish the job she is layin' out for us was ready. If we strike a big haul there we'll have enough to disband on and go home. I'm sick o' this way o' livin'. And there's them back the other side o' the water that I long to see once more."

"Why not skip now with what we've got?" Sammy suggested.

"And leave our share of five times as much up in the vault? Not much, Master Sammy! Let alone our oath, and the knowledge that some of the gang might fix us if years went by afore we met. No! I stick till we disband free and fair."

"I reckon you're right. I don't know why I spoke as I did."

"To try me, maybe," answered Reddy. "If you did you know how I stand."

"Yes—true as steel," assented the other. "Do you suppose Sludge had any friends on that Black Ball packet?"

"No; or he'd have said so. He was that soft, he told all he knew and a little more!"

"Then there'll not be apt to be any inquiry that'll reach Police Headquarters. If anybody he knew saw us with him, they might ask where we'd left him."

"On the street where he spoke to us and went on—that's all I'd say."

"I wish we had that trunk of his he said was so full of good clothes."

"I don't, for it might cause us trouble. We've got swag that no one could identify. Clothes, marked, have got many a chap in quod. No; enough is enough, old boy."

"I s'pose you're right, Reddy. Shall we stop in the Pewter Mug as we go up?"

"No; I've had enough and done enough for one day. The sooner we are in the Nest the better. The cap'n will grin all over when we report!"

They now hurried on up toward the lonely part of the island, where Tom McCord had built a nest for himself and his Night Hawks. At first it was but an ordinary cottage with four rooms on the first floor—a kitchen, large sitting-room and two bedrooms and four nice chambers above.

The vault and secret passage to the river had been dug by the gang and had cost them over a year of hard labor. For they dared trust no one but themselves with the secret.

When Reddy and Sammy were nearly up to the fringe of trees and bushes which marked the boundary of the three-acre lot owned by McCord, of which space he would not sell a foot, for he wanted no near neighbors, they saw the old captain, evidently in a great state of excitement, rushing around in the vicinity of the house, appearing to be searching for something.

"What is up, cap'n?" cried out Reddy, hastening to join him. "You look worried!"

"I've somethink to worry over, I should say. I went down to the bank o' the river to catch some rock-fish for supper, leaving Jimmy the Weasel in the house. When I got back the brat was gone! And where—that's the question?"

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW SNUFFLES LOST HIS NOSE.

"GONE and in the girl's dress?" cried Reddy. "Where on earth could he go and what for?"

"Gone to get a breath o' fresh air. Gone to the woods where I could squeal, and kick, and jump and stretch my legs, and nobody would see me, and laugh at my petticoats!"

It was the Weasel himself who answered, as he ran by them into the house with his dress held up above his knees.

"So I've been scared half to death for nothing!" growled the old captain. "I've a good mind to thrash the brat within an inch o' death. I haven't been so put out in a year!"

"You had better keep your hands off from him while he carries that knife, cap'n!" said Reddy. "Like a tiger he has got a taste of blood, and he'll be worse than ever now in his temper!"

"A great idea that I should be afraid of a boy like him. I haven't been so put out for years. I will thrash him. I told him not to stir out of the house while I was away."

The three men entered the cottage together. The face of the captain was dark with anger.

"Didn't I tell you to stay in while I was out a-fishing?" he asked, sternly, as he frowned on the child.

"Don't you know I'm deaf and dumb and can't hear nothin'?" demanded the boy, with provoking assurance.

"I've a mind to make you dumb forever, you little reprobate!" cried the captain. "When you took the oath with the rest you was to obey me!"

"Persactly! And what have I done? Gone out in the woods to stretch myself. Haven't seen nobody! Nor done anything but kick my heels together and squeal."

"You disobeyed my orders. I told you to stay in till I came back."

"Well, I did stay in my petticoats. But I went out for a stretch and I've got it. Shall I clean and cook them fish for supper?"

"Yes—and remember you are deaf and dumb if you can!"

"Bet I will. Don't go off and leave me alone again! When you do the Old Nick gets into me, and I've got to go wrong if I die for it."

That ended the squabble. The boy in girl's clothing helped to get supper, and by the time all the gang were in supper was ready. It was eaten, the dishes cared for, and then reports for the day were in order from members of the gang.

Only Reddy and Sammy had a report to make worth hearing. They had secured a big haul—the rest had not struck lucky veins. And when the story was told, and the money handed over to be placed in the common treasury, they received full credit for the same. They were the heroes of the hour.

Even Jimmy the Weasel looked on them as something near equal to himself, though he felt that he was the biggest man in the gang. He

had scored his man. The others had scored only grab plunder.

At nightfall all the wooden shutters were closed over the windows, the door locked to prevent any sudden intrusion, and then the men took things easy. When Lize was absent the men cooked by turns, for in the life they led no servant could be employed and risked with their secrets.

After supper those who chose played cards or draughts; the rest smoked and exchanged stories and incidents of their crooked lives.

Snuffles had been often bantered about his deformity and generally bore it well, but he always avoided giving an account of how he lost the greater part of his proboscis.

Generally, when asked how he met with the loss, he would say: "It was chewed off in a gin-mill, and that is all there is to say about it."

This night Sammy began teasing him on the old subject and he said:

"Boys, if you'll agree never to open your mouths about it again, I'll tell you how I lost my nose."

"It's a bargain!" cried one and all.

Snuffles fortified himself with a glass from the rum-bottle, shook the ashes from his pipe and then began his tale:

"Years ago, when I lived an honest life, I worked in a bakery in London. I got good wages, and wasn't a bad-looking 'prentice, and as I had to carry out trays of hot buns and muffins o' mornings, had a chance to make some nice acquaintances. Among these was a girl two or three years older than me. She worked in the kitchen of a big house on Axminster street, and as she always met me with smiles, I began to carry an extra lot of cream tarts to give her, for I soon found out that a cream tart was the avenue to her affections. She was a beauty, had an ocean of curls, just the color of Reddy's hair, over there, and a complexion like a blush rose-leaf.

"Things worked well for a while, and I got so we were engaged to be married on Christmas Day then coming, and I was to set up a bakery with my savings.

"One morning I was out a half-hour earlier than usual, and was hurrying toward the basement where she always met me when I saw a sight that fairly froze my blood. The big policeman on that beat stood by the basement door with one arm around her neck and in his other hand a cup of hot coffee. She always had hot coffee for me.

"Neither of them saw me, and I held back and hid in the shade of the stoop, and saw them exchange a half-dozen ardent kisses. I didn't say a word—I let him go off without his knowing what I had seen. Neither did I tell her. I left the buns for the family and cream tarts for her. But I had no time for kisses or coffee that morning. I couldn't swallow his leavings.

"All that day I studied out a sweet revenge. And I prepared for it. I always made the cream tarts. I made six, and in each I put nearly a quarter of a tea-spoonful of ipecac. I made 'em extra sweet so she couldn't taste the medicine. The next morning I went as usual and she got the tarts. I told her when I left 'em that I hoped she would enjoy 'em and if the big policeman came along to give him one or two with his coffee.

"She didn't understand me just then. But, inside of half an hour she did, you bet! And, as luck had it, the big policeman did get a couple, for he happened in just after I left—so I heard next morning.

"I reckon two sicker loveyers never read the Book of Lamentations. They threw up everything but their toe-nails.

"Next morning I went along and forgot to carry any cream tarts. I looked at her face; it was whiter than my muffins, and when I asked her how she and her doxy liked the cream tarts, she whipped out a big bread-knife from under her apron, and off went two-thirds of my nose! If I hadn't taken to my heels, and ran for my life, she would have killed me on the spot.

"Now, boys, I have told the whole story; keep your promise and let me alone. I'm Snuffles, and always will be, and cream tarts was the cause of it."

CHAPTER XV.

SEARCHING FOR THE LOST MAN.

It only took Captain Barnacle three days to get his cargo stowed and the Sea Queen was off on her voyage. A written letter of instructions was given to the captain, in which were the names of the consignees he was to meet at each port, what he was to receive and how to stow it. He was to so arrange that he would come into the port of New York at night—landing the goods not on the manifest at an old pier on the lower part of Staten Island where Mortimor Monk would have a large lighter waiting for the same.

Then he was to run up, report at quarantine and give the custom-house officers a chance to inspect—his fruit. He would have nothing else on his manifest.

If Wilkins could get hold of that letter the fate of the Queen of the Sea was sealed, and from the conversation he had overheard between Monk and his captain, he knew such a letter

would be on board. And he meant to get a copy of it, if in the power of man. That was all he wanted; a copy would serve as well as the original, if afterward he could manage a seizure of the goods as he meant to do.

He had the whole length of the voyage to act in and he was a wary and determined man.

We leave him and his plans for the present to return to another matter which belongs to our story.

A week after the time that poor Peter Sludge was drugged, robbed and carried off on board a ship, which was at sea before he knew how he got there, the captain of the packet went to the British consul and told him that the trunk of a cabin passenger had not been called for, and as the owner, a young man not well posted in the ways of the world, had not been registered at any of the hotels as he could learn, and had landed with a large sum of money on his person, he feared he had fallen into bad hands. He gave his name and description to the consul.

The latter sent clerks all over the city, and when they could not get any trace of him, the consul had his trunk brought on shore to his office and opened. From papers in it he learned that the owner, Peter Sludge, must have had near a thousand pounds on his person when he landed—enough to excite the cupidity of many a rascal who would rob and then kill to hide the robbery.

He went to the mayor of the city and reported the matter, and the mayor went with him in person to the chief of police. The latter at once took the case in hand.

First he got a complete description of Sludge from the officers of the ship. Then, authorized by the consul, he offered a liberal reward for the discovery of Sludge if alive, or his body if dead, and a proportionate reward for any information concerning him.

He instructed special officers to go through every den in the slums of the city, and to use every energy in the attempt to get a trace of the missing man.

Close watch was kept upon known desperadoes to see if any of them exhibited an unusual amount of money; the watch and chain and jewelry were looked for in every pawnshop; every means in the power of the Department was put in motion in the case, to solve the mysterious disappearance.

When twenty-four hours passed without a clew, the chief told the consul that he had little hope Mr. Sludge would ever turn up alive. There were many low dens in the Five Points and elsewhere, in which a man could be inveigled, struck down and robbed. If hit so hard he never could rise again, his body would easily be disposed of—either sold for the dissection-table or tumbled into one or other of the great rivers whose muddy depths might never yield it up—or if they did, in such a state it could not be recognized.

Where was Reddy and Sammy all this time? In close hiding from the moment the offer of reward and description was posted, for, like all guilty men, they feared some one would be found who would remember seeing the three together on the street. They did not even dare to go down to the Black Swan to consult English George as to the danger.

The captain went there and found the hardened old bruiser calm and confident. Sludge was hundreds of miles to the southward, if, indeed, he outlived the hardships of a sailor's life. He never would remember, even if he got back, enough to injure those who had "gone through" him, since he would have no witness to substantiate his own drunken memories.

The captain went back and caused Reddy to transform his appearance by shaving off his red hair and putting on a black wig, and also gave him and Sammy a stake after they were disguised and sent them on to Philadelphia to operate until he recalled them, after this matter had blown over or been given up.

This left the Night Hawks short-handed for any bold operations, for the two who went were about the best in the gang.

But he could better spare their absence than endure the risk of their arrest.

Mary the Mute had become used to her new style of dress and rather enjoyed it, since it carried with it the chance of safety. But the Weasel grew bolder, as time went on, and began to extend his or her walks, and to look for chances of renewed pilfering.

Lize had been permanently promoted to the position of lady's maid to Cybele Monk, and had sent a note to her father, written in slang phrases which only men like him would understand, saying she had got posted as to the lay of a vast amount of swag and only waited for an opportune time to call in the band and make a strike which would enrich them all.

Thus for the time we leave them.

CHAPTER XVI.

POOR PETER SLUDGE!

It would be wicked if we left poor Peter Sludge to drift off alone on the wild sea of misfortune and not to keep any track of him.

When he recovered consciousness, many hours after he sunk into a helpless stupor in the crib of English George, he was so deathly sick that

he could hardly raise his head. He was at sea again—that he could tell by the pitching and rolling which made him feel awfully, apart from the effect of the drug he had swallowed in his last glass of rum.

He could scarcely see his surroundings, for only one dim swinging lantern lighted the dirty fore-castle in which he lay. There were three or four other men in sailor's garb, either stupid drunk or asleep in bunks like that in which he found himself. He felt that he was not in the clothes which he wore when he landed from the packet, and from the horrible smell of bilgewater and tobacco-smoke, that he was not in the cabin of the ship in which he had come over.

Alarmed beyond expression, he was just about to cry out and ask where he was, when a half-dozen heavy blows from a handspike on the combings of a hatchway almost over his head, startled him and he heard a harsh voice shout:

"Tumble up out of that fo'castle, you drunken lubbers, or I'll come down and help you! There's no skulkin' allowed on this ship, and you'll cussed soon find it out. So tumble up lively, if you don't want help!"

"What does he mean? Where am I?" groaned poor Sludge.

"Shanghied aboard o' some bloody drogher like me, I suppose!" growled a dirty-looking man in seaman's dress, who had one eye in mourning and a bad gash on his forehead. "Cussed if I know where we are, but we're called for on deck and we'd better go, or that mate will be down here atop of us!"

"My gracious, I'm in sailor's clothes, and I never was a sailor and never can be! And all my money is gone!" groaned Sludge, getting out of the bunk with difficulty, and only able to stand by holding on to the edge of the bunk boards.

Staggering to a short dirty ladder, he crept upon deck where a tall man, rough-faced and roughly dressed, stood with a short rope in his hand ready to go below and stir up those whom he called skulkers.

"It's well you're stirring. What's your name?" cried this man, looking at a paper he held in his hand.

"Peter Sludge, sir—hand I'm awful sick!"

"Peter Sludge, able-bodied seaman—you're on the roll, and I guess a little work'll drive the drunk-sickness out of you! Go aft and report to the second mate for his watch!"

"I'm no sailor, sir. I'm a Hinglish gentleman, just landed in Hamerica!" groaned Sludge.

"That be blowed! You're shipped aboard the Yankee clipper Growler, bound to Montevideo, and had your advance. Here's your name on the roll, and you'll do the duty of an A. B., or we'll put the Yankee stripes on your Hinglish back till you can feel as well as see 'em. Move aft—I've no time for foolin'!"

"My gracious! I've been drugged, and robbed, and I don't know where I be or what to do."

"That's what lots like you say after a drunk. Move aft, or I'll help you!"

Poor Sludge staggered off in the direction indicated by the hand of the mate. Twice the heave of the sea pitched him headlong against the lee bulwarks, and once he fell in the wet lee scuppers, but he finally brought up near the quarter-deck, where the second mate waited for the men whom the other mate was rousing up for his watch. The captain of the ship, a man with sharp gray eyes and a very red face stood close by him.

"Hey, there! You're one of the new men that came off drunk last night, ain't you?" cried the mate.

"I must have been brought 'ere in the night; but I wasn't drunk. I've been drugged and robbed!" groaned Sludge.

"Oh, yes, that is the old story!" retorted the captain. "You'll have a chance to earn more money with a six-months' voyage before you! The sooner you sober up and go to work like a man the better for you. I allow no idlers on these decks. Dip your head in a bucket o' salt water and brighten up!"

"Are you the cap'n, sir?"

"Yes, I am—a fair man where there's no skulkin'—a livin' terror to them that tries any games on me. D'ye hear?"

"My gracious, yes, sir; but please listen. I'm a free-born Hinglishman. I've been robbed and but 'ere by them that robbed me. Hindeed hit's so!"

"I've nothing to do with that. You weren't robbed here, if you were robbed at all. All you've got to do is to work and obey orders. If you don't, you'll find that broad back of yours cut to ribbons. No talk back! Wash up and stand your watch like a man."

Poor Peter! He groaned and turned back into the waist of the ship, where he saw three or four buckets full of water standing near the lee bulwarks.

He knelt down and tried to wash—got some of the salt water in his mouth and that set his stomach to going. Poor fellow—he had been sea-sick all the way across the Atlantic, and now he was worse than ever.

Relieved, after a great part of the foul con-

tents of his stomach had gone into the lee scuppers, he tried to rise and learn what he must do. He saw the first mate lashing some of the men who had been slow to come on deck, and he felt as if he would surely die if he had to feel the weight of the rope's end as they did.

Looking over the rail he could see land a long way off, but the ship, under a heavy press of sail, was fast leaving it.

"Aft here, a dozen o' you, and take a pull at main-topsail and to'gallant braces!" shouted the second mate.

"Where be they? I don't know what to do!" moaned the unhappy Sludge.

"Jump with me, and pull and haul where you see me at it!" said the man who had spoken to him in the fore-castle.

And Sludge staggered aft, and soon was pulling as hard as he could on some ropes with the others.

"That's it! Now you're coming to your senses!" spoke the mate, in a gentler tone, when he saw Sludge at work. "Do your duty like a man and we ask no more!"

"I'll do hall I know!" groaned Peter, who saw it was useless to kick against fate.

There wasn't a great deal to do in that watch—all sail had been set and the ship was running off with the wind abeam on her course.

When the next watch was called Peter went below with the sailor that had a black eye and a gashed forehead and got his first meal—a cut of salt beef, a pot of water and a couple of hard crackers as big as the crown of his tarpaulin hat.

He could hardly swallow the coarse food, but he was weak and empty, and he had to eat something or sink down and give up.

And he did his best.

And then he slept till his watch was called again.

Slept from very weakness and worry of mind.

When he went on deck at the call of "Lar-board watch, ahoy!" he found the scene changed. No land was in sight. The wind had freshened, and the ship was rolling and tumbling over a heavy sea, while the upper spars bent and creaked under the strain.

"Aloft there, you A. B's, and stand by to take in to'gallant sails!" shouted the mate.

"Tend halliards and braces, you waisters!"

"Come, hurry aloft with me!" cried his new friend to Peter Sludge. "If you don't they'll start you with a rope's end!"

And he pointed aloft, whither men were already climbing fast as they could.

"Me go hup there?" groaned Peter. "I never could! I'd fall hafore I'd got as 'igh as my 'ead!"

"Don't be a fool! I can't wait. Here goes—come along!" cried the man, and he sprang upon the ratlines and went up fast as he could.

Peter tried to follow, but he got no further than onto the rail, for his hand slipped as he tried to grasp a shroud and he toppled back and struck head-first on the hard deck.

When he came to, he was in his bunk with a bandaged head and really a very sick man. The hurt, and his agony of mind, had brought on what the captain was satisfied was brain fever. And it increased till poor Peter was crazy as a loon. And thus, for a time, we must leave him.

CHAPTER XVII.

GAME FOR THE NIGHT HAWKS.

THE promotion of Eliza McCord to the position of lady's maid to the daughter of Mortimor Monk gave her a great deal more liberty than she had enjoyed while acting in the capacity of chambermaid and general help about the house.

Her young mistress often sent her out to make small purchases when she did not care to go shopping herself. Though when thus out she could go around town to some extent, she did not dare to go as far out of the busy part of the city as to her father's cottage, although she was now ready to communicate with him. And she did not like to trust her direction on paper and send a letter, for fear it might fall into wrong hands.

She knew many of the police could "patter flash," or, in other words, understand and talk the language of thieves as well as the thieves themselves. So even in that slang she feared to give her father his final information to prepare him for the crime she had been so long planning.

Therefore she was more than pleased, one day, when out after some ribbons for Miss Cybele, to meet Jimmy the Weasel in his disguise as Mary the Mute near the Monk Mansion.

The child had a slate hung to a string around her neck, and on it in large letters at the top these words had been written:

"I am a poor deaf and dumb girl. I do not beg, but I will work, if I can, to help my sick father. Mother is dead."

Lize took the slate and pretended to write on it, while she said in a whisper, though no one was near:

"I'm so glad to see you, Jimmy!"

"Not gladder than I be to see you!" whispered the well-disguised boy, also pretending to write and to rub out what he had written when she had seen it. "What can I do for you?"

"Take a long message to my father. Can you remember it?"

"You bet high, I can! Blab!"

"I know where Monk keeps more gold than the whole gang can back off at once. Tell him that!"

"Bet your back hair I will."

"And he'll have to come ready to pick the double locks on two iron doors, or to force 'em open if he can't get into the vault no other way."

"I hear. I've got all that, 'Lize."

"You see that brick house with the stone lions each side o' the house?"

"My blinkers is on the crib."

"The first dark night, when it rains, so the police will be skulkin' under cover, at midnight, I'll open that front door. He knows what for, and must come fixed for everything! He'll find me there."

"Ware Hawk! There's a lunky bloke lookin' at us—comin' this way."

The boy's whisper was low, and his fingers flew like lightning over his slate, for Mortimor Monk was coming up the street and close at hand.

"What have you here, Eliza?" asked the millionaire with a pleasant smile when he came near.

"A poor deaf and dumb girl, sir, who wants work. I spoke to her first; her face seemed so intelligent I did not know but she might be a fraud. But I am sure she can neither hear or speak, poor thing!"

"We have no work in the house she can do?"

"Oh, no, sir. I have a little money of my own and will give her a couple of shillings for her sick father and let her go. Miss Cybele sent me out for some ribbons and I must hurry back."

"Add this to your alms, my good girl—I am glad to see you are kind-hearted."

He gave her a gold-piece and passed on.

"What a downy cove he is," murmured the boy.

"He is the master where I live!" said 'Lize.

"Now tell my father he always keeps his keys on his own person, and I can't get at 'em to take a wax model—so he'll have to come fixed to pick or break. And say it must be still work, for the old man sleeps close by, and his nephew, smart as men are made, stays in the house o' nights."

"All right, Cully 'Lize! I'll give the cap'n all you've blabbed. And you can look for us on time. We're fly, bet your back hair o' that!"

The sharp-faced Weasel, with the gold-piece Mortimor Monk had contributed, in his hand, darted off and was out of sight in a few seconds.

"Well—the plan is laid. If it works—it will be our last job in America!" said 'Lize to herself, as she turned and went to the house. "I'm sick of leading a crooked life and living in constant fear, night and day. There must be near a million in gold in that vault. I saw bags piled as high as my head, and the rows must be twelve or fifteen deep clean across the wide vault."

"Where did ye get that?" asked the captain, when Mary the Mute danced into the cottage, holding up a ten-dollar gold-piece in a dirty hand.

"The old hump-backed bloke where our 'Lize works gi'n it to me!" was the answer.

"You haven't been there?"

"Nixy! Seen the bloke on the street. Me an' 'Lize had a patter! He come along and she soaped him with a yarn about me bein' a poor deaf an' dumb gal wid a sick dad to keep in grub an' 'potticary stuff, an' he melted. He went down inter his clothes and fetched up this shiner for me and my sick dad!"

The snake eyes danced while the boy told the tale.

"That isn't all. She has located the old bloke's swag. He has piles of it, all in bags—gold, more, she said, than all our gang could back off!"

"That's good news!"

"And the first dark, rainy night—when the cops will be a-snoozin' under cover—she'll open the front door o' the crib and we're all to be on hand. The gold is in a vault, wid two iron doors!"

"Has she waxed the keys?"

"Nixy! The old bloke carries 'em wid him night an' day. She can't get a finger on 'em. You'll have to pick or break, she says!"

"Well—that can be done. But I wish I had keys. With an oiled lock there's no noise in them! I'll have to send to Philly for Reddy and Sam. It's full moon now and we'll have to wait a bit anyway! I must see 'Lize, myself, some way!"

"She gits out of'n, she told me. I met her on de road. S'posin' I see her again an' tell her, and she'll then set a time for patterin' wid ye?"

"You'll do right. I'll send for the two boys that's away and see her as soon as I can. Things will be hunky in a week, so far as the moon goes!"

"That's so, Cully Cap. Anythink in the cupboard? I'm hungry as an owl!"

"Go and help yourself!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

PETER SLUDGE COMING BACK—"WARE HAWK" NOW.

WHEN Peter Sludge was stricken with brain fever, the captain of the Growler, who was not a bad-hearted man, though a very strict disciplinarian, had him moved aft where he could doctor him, for, like all sea-captains who have no physician on board, he had some knowledge of the uses of medicine and a good medicine-chest, and several good medical books to guide him.

It was pitiful to hear the poor fellow rave about his home in England, his money in bank, and how he had been robbed, and he was so persistent in one story, in all his frenzy, that the captain and mates, too, began to believe he told the truth.

It was a sure thing he was no sailor. The very awkwardness which caused his accident proved that.

For many days the poor fellow wavered between life and death, but finally his fever abated and his frenzy passed away. He was weak and helpless as an infant and so unused to the sea that it was a question if he ever grew strong enough to do any duty aboard ship.

The captain now listened to his story and believed it. Peter remembered plainly that after landing from the Liverpool packet he was met by two men—one he described fully, for Reddy was a man easily remembered—the other pretty closely. He told of their guiding him to an English chop-house known as the "Black Swan," kept by a man they called George, and that a fat woman was behind the bar. He had foolishly boasted of his money before them and also had taken several drinks of gin, hot, with sugar. From thence on he knew nothing until he found himself at sea in the Growler in strange clothing, without his watch or jewelry, and his money all gone.

"If you was back in New York where the English consul could help you, you might get some of your money back and have the dirty pirates that robbed you punished!" said the captain when he heard the whole story.

"Yes, sir, hif I was honly back there. But 'ow hever will I get there? Hif I was free, I've no money this side o' London. I've four thousand pounds in the Bank o' Hingland there!"

"Twenty thousand dollars—a pretty good pile if you only knew how to take care of it!" said the captain. "Carelessness and money got you into the scrape you're in now. The only wonder to me is, the thieves didn't kill you instead of shipping you off as a drunken sailor. I guess they thought you'd die anyway, they drugged you so steep!"

"I did nearly die, didn't I, sir?"

"Yes—you had a close call. I'd almost given you up when the fever broke. But I hate to have a death aboard ship—it disheartens a crew and brings bad luck. I did my level best for you!"

"I can only thank you now, cap'n—but if never I get back 'ome, I'll send you money to pay for all your trouble."

"I want no pay, Sludge. We sea-captains have to be rough, we have so many *toughs* to deal with, but take us full and by, I guess we are not all mercenary or utterly heartless."

"I know that, sir. You've been hawful kind to me, or I wouldn't be a-livin' now!"

"Never mind. Here comes the steward with some broth and a glass o' port wine. The last is first chop—I got it in Lisbon myself. If you get strong enough and I meet a ship bound home, I'll send you back to York to the care of the British consul."

"My gracious! 'Ow hever will I pay you for such goodness, cap'n!"

"By putting them land-sharks through, when you get to York. You'll have no trouble in finding English George when you get there, if he doesn't hear of your arrival and scoot out o' town before the consul gets grappin'-irons on him. He makes a business of picking up sailors, skinning 'em out of what they have and then shippin' them off out of the way. If I hadn't been three hands short and all ready for sea, I never would have taken a man he brought. He is a rascal from the word go to the finish."

"Hexactly! And he seemed so friendly 'cause I was Hinglish!"

"That made no difference to him. Fish are fish when they get into his gill-net. He ought to be hung, and I hope he will be yet. The other men roped you in, but he or his frowzy wife fixed your grog. You can send him to State Prison for it. If I get a chance to send you home—I'll write to the consul and tell him what I know of the dirty pirate!"

Gratefully poor Peter Sludge took his broth and wine, for he now began to hope. While his heart was filled with despair, there was little chance for him to get well.

The officers were all kind to him when they realized that he was not a skulk, for harsh as they were in their way, they had the hearts of true American seamen beneath their rough jackets and felt a pity for the poor fellow who lay helpless in the cabin.

Days went by and each day Peter Sludge showed a little improvement. He had been so

thoroughly purged of all biliousness that he was not now very sea-sick and was able to retain nourishment when taken.

They had now got down nearly to the equator and the voyage out was fully half-completed and a fair wind had held all the way.

Captain Bruce was in the best of humor when a sail steering northward was sighted dead ahead the day before they expected to cross the line.

The marine code of signals was not so perfect then as now, but before the ships met he was satisfied that the other vessel was an American and northward bound.

So he and his mates made up a bag of clothes for Peter Sludge and also a purse with money enough in it to pay his passage in the cabin back, if the ship should prove to be bound to New York.

He shortened sail on the Growler as the other ship came near and hove to, to speak her when close aboard.

"Ship ahoy!—where from and where bound?" he shouted through his trumpet when the other ship braced up and hove to just to windward of the Growler.

"The Caroline G, with hides from Buenos Ayres for New York," was the answer.

"Good! She belongs to the same house as the Growler!" said Captain Bruce.

"We're the Growler, in the same trade, bound for Montevideo," he shouted. "I'll come aboard and bring some late York papers with me, and a passenger I want to send north."

"All right—bear a hand. This is too good a wind to lose," replied the other captain.

Peter Sludge forgot all his late griefs and troubles in the brightening prospect. He was barely able to walk, leaning on the arm of the mate, but he got into the boat with the captain, while tears of gratitude streamed down his pale cheeks.

He was soon on the deck of the Caroline and introduced to Captain Bunker of that ship, by his friend Captain Bruce, for the two captains were old friends.

When the former heard the story of Mr. Sludge from Bruce, he at once consented to carry him home and post him when he arrived in New York in the matter of reaching the British consul.

This attended to, Bruce bade Peter good-by and returned to his own ship.

As he squared away on his old course, Captain Bruce shouted to Sludge:

"Don't let up on them *pirates* when you reach York till you have every one in State Prison!"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE NIGHT HAWKS HUNT A NEW NEST.

ALL was excitement in the band of Night Hawks when it became known that it was now only a matter of time when the grand attempt to strike for a fortune for all would be made. They hardly cared to look around for any small chances. Yet the captain would not let them lie by idly in the cottage.

He knew it would not do for a gang of idlers to be seen around day after day, if any of their neighbors happened to pass, for naturally the question would arise: How do men who look poor *live*, if they do not labor?

And while they were abroad, he could study out and perfect plans to save himself and band from pursuit and arrest when the hue and cry arose which would surely follow upon a great and daring robbery like that now in contemplation.

He made up his mind to find another hiding-place and for a time at least to close up his cottage by the river-side, where he had never felt entirely secure since the visit of the police officers and their second call with "old Hays" in their company.

He took his boat one day with one of the men, hoisted sail and went down the bay on a tour of exploration. Down near the lower end of Staten Island, he landed at an old pier which seemed very little used, with a growth of thick cedar in the rear of it. Near this grove there was an old house which did not seem to be inhabited.

Leaving the boat fastened to the pier, he went up to the old house alone. As he surmised, it was vacant and partially in ruins, though there were some habitable rooms and the roof appeared capable of sheltering inmates from a storm.

There did not appear to be any roads or paths or signs of travel near, and the fact that he started an owl from its roosting-place over the porch, and several wild rabbits from the weeds and grass close by, showed that visitors certainly were not frequent.

Neither was there any other house near. After a careful study of the place and its surroundings, he was satisfied that it would make a capital hiding-place for his party for a time while he prepared to escape to England if his venture was a success.

After leaving the pier he asked some men in an oyster-boat coming from the banks below, who owned the pier and house.

None of the men knew, but an old oysterman with white hair and beard said a family had

been murdered there long years before by river-pirates and the place had been haunted ever since. No one could live there, and he didn't believe anybody claimed the undesirable property.

This settled the point for Tom McCord. He didn't believe in ghosts or haunted houses, and he made up his mind that when he made his "raise" from the Beekman street mansion, he would convey the anticipated "swag" at once to his boat and with the gang pull down to the old house and there remain in hiding till the first excitement was over. He would provision it at night, and have enough bedding put in to keep the gang from suffering, though it would only be a temporary home. He intended to buy a vessel large enough to take them and their plunder over the ocean. He would remove and hide the treasure then belonging to the band in or near the deserted house, so if suspicion did fall on the regular rendezvous of the band, nothing would be found there but an uninhabited house and an empty vault.

When he returned and told his men of his discovery and plans, they were pleased with the scheme, believing it promised safety. And it was decided that the work of removal and concealment, as well as provisioning the new hiding-place should be begun and go on every night until it was ready to receive the gang.

Their boat, a large barge which had belonged to a man-of-war at some time, sailed well, and when six sturdy men were at the oars could make very fair way through the water. It was kept concealed in an opening in the rocks near the vault that led to the water from the cottage, so hidden by a thorny thicket that no casual passer-by on land or water would discover it.

For three nights in succession old Tom McCord went down the bay to the old Rookery, as he called it, each time taking a load from the cottage and its vault. And when a last visit was made he had taken down about all he cared to take from the cottage before he left the latter place forever.

He had managed to get one interview with 'Lize alone in a room at the Black Swan, and she had explained the position of the vault and the rooms in which Mortimor Monk and the rest of the family slept, so that he thought he could take as much of the gold as all could carry off, and not be overheard on a stormy night.

If this was done, he would have enough to satisfy himself and the gang, added to the amount already in their treasury, and they would leave the country as soon as they could.

All were agreed in that. The murder done by the Weasel had terrified them, for though they were burglars and thieves, they had not got into blood-letting as a part of their profession.

Reddy and Sam came on from Philadelphia and brought a small amount of swag with them, when the captain wrote that they were needed at home. They had decoyed a young Quaker from an interior town into their temporary resort to see a wonderful sight—a two-headed calf and a pet alligator, for he wore a watch and a bunch of seals of an antique pattern, and exhibited a well-filled purse in the market where he stopped at a coffee-house for a lunch.

When he got inside he suddenly found himself tied and gagged and then blindfolded. While in this condition he was cleaned out—all his money and his watch taken, and then, in the dead of night, he was led off into a distant part of the city, denuded of all his outside clothing, and left, in his terror and misery, he knew not where.

Of course, unacquainted in the town, when he found help he could not tell where he had been, and he was so confused and scared he could not even describe the robbers.

He had not seen the curiosities he had desired to look upon, but he had found the "elephant" in a figurative sense.

They had also lifted a bag of hard cash from a market man, the proceeds of a large sale of fresh butter, poultry and garden truck, and this had paid their board and left a small amount over.

These two heartily concurred in the plans laid out by Tom McCord and agreed to obey every order without a murmur.

They were to enter the mansion well armed when they went, but not to use arms except they were discovered and were themselves in danger.

An alarm in a part of the city so thickly populated and not over three blocks from Police Headquarters at the City Hall, would bring a dangerous crowd upon them before they could get away, especially if loaded with plunder.

All this was canvassed and every precaution taken. Shoes with thick felt soles were provided—instruments to work at doors and locks were wrapped in cloth to deaden sound—nothing was omitted in the way of preparation.

CHAPTER XX.

MR. EBENEZER WILKINS PLAYS A NICE GAME —BUT LOSES ON A FULL HAND.

CAPTAIN BARNACLE was delighted with his new command when he got fairly outside where he could test her in fresh gales and heavy seas.

She stood up well under heavy spars and a great spread of canvas—she proved very fast, and as a sea-boat could not be excelled, if even equaled.

He had a good crew—mostly young and active men, two trusty mates who knew how to carry sail and get her pace from the fairy "Queen of the Sea."

Wilkins, the last man on the muster-roll was not the best man in the crew, but he was earnest and willing and seemed ever foremost in trying to please his officers.

When the steward slipped going down the fore-hatchway into the hold after some stores and broke his leg badly in two places, Wilkins was put in his place to serve until he got well.

The steward always insisted he had been tripped by a rope wickedly drawn across the head of the ladder. But it was not there when Wilkins and others ran to his rescue, so he *must* have been mistaken. Wilkins insisted on it.

At any rate, from that time on Wilkins in his duties aft had the run of the cabin and many a chance to look over the log and see the records. He was very willing and subservient, attentive to all his duties, and Barnacle really liked the man, having no suspicion of his real character.

There was one, however, who did mistrust him, and that was the real steward, who lay suffering in his berth just forward of the main cabin. For he felt sure that the rope which had tripped him when he fell had been removed by Wilkins when he pretended to hurry to his rescue.

If he had not put it there, why did he remove it before any one else came? And why did he put himself forward to fill the place of acting steward?

The real steward had been taken from his own smack by Captain Barnacle because he had served there a long time, and the captain knew he was faithful and trustworthy. And while he lay there in his berth helpless—at least unable to move from it, he determined, as far as he could, to keep an eye on the acting steward and to see what he was up to.

He possessed one of those handy pocket-knives, which beside the large and small blades, has a corkscrew, gimlet and screw-driver attached. As the head of his berth extended against the partition between the steerage, where he lay, and the cabin, he easily bored a small hole through the plank and scooped out an eyelet-hole large enough on his side for vision, but so small on the other no one would notice it.

Through this he could see all over the interior of the cabin, except inside the state-rooms, which the officers only used at night.

And when all the officers were on deck he could see Wilkins nervously searching about and looking into everything he had time to investigate.

"That chap is a thief," he muttered to himself, "and I'll catch him napping yet, and when I am able to get out o' this I'll expose him."

The vessel made a fast trip to Jamaica and discharged cargo. Ballast was taken in there, and then she ran over to the Island of Martinique, to begin taking in cargo.

Here ballast was discharged, and many bales and boxes came off, and after them a few hundred cocoanuts, some limes and lemons, and a quantity of pineapples.

While the vessel lay at Porto Rico the disabled steward got the first real point on Wilkins. Captain Barnacle and the first mate were on shore—the second mate had the watch on deck.

Looking through his peep-hole the steward saw Wilkins come out of the captain's state-room with several papers in his hand.

One of these, which had a red tape bound about it, he opened and read, and seemed greatly elated over it.

Getting pen, ink and paper, he copied it, and putting the copy in a secret pocket inside the lining of his vest, he retied the paper as he had found it, and carried it and the other papers back into the state-room.

He was so pleased with what he had done, that he spoke loud enough to be heard by the watchful steward:

"I've got both *him* and old *Monk* now! That letter of instructions will fix them. It is worth a thousand dollars in gold to me!"

"He is a customs spy—a revenue shark! And he means to ruin my captain!" muttered the steward. "But I'll block his game. I'm glad I thought to watch the scoundrel. Now I know *why* I got this broken leg. As long as he worked outside the cabin, he couldn't get at what he wanted to see!"

Every morning, nearly, when in port, the acting steward was sent on shore to get fresh provisions and stores for cabin use.

The next morning after the real steward made his discovery, when the acting steward had gone ashore, the former sent a man who was passing his berth to tell the captain he wanted to see him.

The latter came to him quickly, for he valued him very much.

"Cap'n," said the invalid, "I'm no spy, but I've had to act like one to catch the rascal who gave me this broken leg. And I've caught him—got him foul as sure as you and I live! That

man Wilkins, whom you put in my place, is neither more nor less than a revenue spy, put aboard the Queen to catch you tripping!"

"Saunders, are you sure you are not prompted by jealousy or hate in making this charge?" said the captain. "I have seen no suspicious actions in the man!"

"We'll see, cap'n. I've had my eyes on him a good while, when he didn't dream of such a thing. Have you a paper, tied up with a red string, in your state-room, which you can call a 'letter of instructions'?"

"Yes—yes—what of that? No one has seen it besides myself—it is under lock and I keep the key!"

"Wilkins has not only seen it, but he copied it yesterday on the cabin table when you and Mr. Barnard were ashore and the second mate on watch. I saw him! Look through this peephole, please!"

The captain did so and had a full view of the cabin.

"He copied it," continued the steward, "and put the copy in a pocket inside the lining of his vest. Then he took that and other papers back into your room, and when he came out, rubbing his hands together in his joy, he said, loud enough for me to hear him here plainly:

"I've got both *him* and old *Monk*, now. That letter of instructions is worth a thousand dollars to me!"

"The scoundrel!" cried Barnacle, convinced with what he could see and the straightforward statement of the steward, whom he *knew* to be faithful. "I am warned in time, through your faith and strategy. I'll never forget it of you, Saunders. Now I am satisfied that he was at the bottom of your accident, for this shows why he wanted to get into the cabin. He thinks he has got me foul. But it will be a long time before he gets to New York with that letter of instructions in his pocket. I'll fix him off in a way to make him so sick of playing the spy, he'll never want to take another such job in hand. There's a slaver in port bound to the coast of Africa. I know her captain well. He is short of hands. I'll supply him with one. And when Wilkins, whom I'll send to his craft with a present of a dozen of wine does not come back here, I'll put him on the rolls as a deserter. A half-dozen doubloons will fix him for a year or more, if he don't get the jungle fever."

"He deserves it all, captain. Think how I have suffered, and also think how kind you have been to him and he plotting your ruin all the time. I think you can find the letter now. He dresses up when he goes on shore, does he not?"

"Yes!"

"Well, cap'n, he had his old velvet every-day vest on when he stowed the copy away."

The captain hurried to the pantry where the steward had a clothes closet, and swung his hammock. He found the copy of the letter and read it. Everything was verified. He restored the letter to its hiding-place and going on deck instantly ordered a boat and rowed to the slaver, a clipper brig all ready for sea, lying at anchor near by.

He was there but a little while, long enough, however, to arrange a nice little drama in which Mr. Wilkins, of the Secret Service, would take the principal part. When he returned to the Queen of the Sea, Wilkins was just coming off from shore with the dinghy,* which he rowed with a pair of sculls. His market-basket was full.

When he got alongside Captain Barnacle said: "I wish you'd take this basket of wine, Wilkins, to Captain Gregg, of the brig Venus, out there, with my compliments. He has done me many favors, at one time and another, and as he is going to sea the wine will come handy."

"Certainly, sir," said Wilkins, and he passed up his market-basket and received the wine.

Speedily he rowed off to the brig, and soon was seen going over her side with the wine. He did not reënter the boat alongside, but in a few minutes it was seen that the brig was under way and standing out to sea.

"By the big horn spoon! that's cool," cried Captain Barnacle, in well-simulated surprise, as the dinghy was seen adrift as it had been cast off from the brig. "That fellow, Wilkins, has deserted, been offered higher wages in the brig and gone. I knew they wanted hands, but I didn't think he would desert."

And thus it came that "Ebenezer Wilkins, O. S., acting steward," was marked on the log-book of the Queen of the Sea as having "deserted at Porto Rico, Island of Martinique."

So the dinghy was sent for and a new steward picked out from among the crew to act until Saunders could once more do duty.

The copy of the letter of instructions was secured and destroyed, and only two persons on the schooner knew the real facts—Barnacle and his faithful steward.

Every one else on board honestly believed that Wilkins, influenced by the offer of higher wages on a long voyage, had "cut and run."

It was a bold and keen plan, but the best Barnacle could adopt. Even Wilkins could not be sure the captain had any hand in his abduction, since he had paid the captain of the slaver

* A small skiff.

to invite him on board on pretense of taking a letter back and then to keep him by force in his cabin till at sea, when he was to be put to work with the crew and kept there with no chance of escape till the crew were discharged after their voyage was made out and back.

And if he ever got back to New York he could prove nothing, since his copy of Monk's letter was left behind, and he had seen no overt act of smuggling on the part of Barnacle.

But the future is something even a novelist cannot portray, and what is before Mr. Wilkins mortal cannot picture. Life on board a slaver at best is a horror, even to the officers who have cabin room and the best provisions they can secure.

To men before the mast, hard work, peril from men-of-war, the stench of the slave-holds, few writers have the power to portray so dark a picture and the most vivid imagination can scarcely realize the horror of such a life.

The Queen of the Sea was safe for this voyage at least, and Barnacle forewarned that his vessel was suspected could be more on his guard.

CHAPTER XXI.

OLD HAYS DREAMS A DREAM.

AMONG the many "mysteries" which the eagle-eyed chief of police was busy in bringing to light, the crimes he sought to discover, two without a single clew gave him great annoyance.

One was the failure to find the boy assassin of the police-officer in the Pewter Mug—the other the disappearance of Peter Sludge. It angered him. And he blamed the men under him.

That a boy so marked in looks, who had almost been in their grasp should escape and continue free, was too bad.

And that a man peculiar in looks and dialect, with a large amount of money to spend, could land with a crowd from a ship in broad daylight and disappear almost instantly so completely that no offer of reward brought forth man, woman or child who had seen him, was worse yet.

He felt a pride in his department, he did his own duty so faithfully that his very name was a terror to evil-doers, yet here were two cases of dismal failure.

He had walked the city all over by night and by day and had scanned the face and form of every boy he met, yet the snake-like eyes, the lean, wiry shape, the tangled yellow hair of the boy murderer was not seen.

Neither could he see the blonde young Englishman who spelled *ham* without an *h* and *eggs* with that consonant as a leader.

Blamed by the mayor, pronounced incompetent by the English consul-general, he threatened to resign.

He would have done so, but for one thing. He was not naturally a superstitious man, but like very many people—the writer himself is one of them—he had a certain belief in *dreams*. And while he was worrying over these cases, he had dreamed three nights in succession that a large man with a hump on his back had come into his office, leading that boy murderer, with a rope around his neck.

And while he was talking to the little wretch, that a tall, yellow-haired Englishman rushed in and said:

"I've found them as robbed and tried to murder me!"

He woke each time so excited that the sweat was oozing from his brow and his nerves were all in a flutter.

And he then said, to himself, as he said to others:

"I will surely capture the boy murderer, and I will find the missing Englishman."

And his subordinates believed him. He so seldom failed in anything which he undertook.

Thieves, especially burglars, in that day, did not, as now, work in gangs—they prowled about occasionally in pairs, but as a general thing every man worked "on his own hook" and took single-handed chances.

The Night Hawks, coming strangers into the city, and settling down outside the occupied parts of the town, and working their little games very carefully and quietly, had not yet come under his eye.

That is—not to his knowledge—though, as we are aware, he had seen the captain, Lize and Reddy.

The readiness the captain evinced in visiting his office, would have thrown him off his guard quicker than anything else.

Ever on the alert, instructing every officer under him, that unceasing vigilance was demanded, he walked on, duty, DUTY his constant thought.

And his reward was coming.

While he was watching for crime and criminals, the Night Hawks, with one grand coup in view, were preparing in all ways, for their final efforts. If it was a success, they would shake American dust from their feet, and no more be seen on the Western side of the blue Atlantic.

The time was near, Lize was ready in her treachery to kind employers to open the door to the ruffian band, only a dark and stormy night was waited for.

The old captain grew nervous and anxious,

cool as he generally was. Though he had safely hidden—actually buried the treasure of the band near the old Rookery, he went down there every night to see if any one ever went near the place, or if there was any danger of visitors.

One night he got a fearful scare. He had landed with Reddy and another of the band, they having gone down in their boat under sail. As usual, they had lowered their mast and drawn the boat in under the pier so no one passing would see it. Just as they were starting in the darkness for the old house, a very large lighter, with an immense lug-sail, rounded to right alongside the old pier, and a couple of men jumped ashore and made her fast.

Trembling, for fear these men and some half-dozen or more on board would go up to the house and discover that it had been visited, the captain and his mates crouched down behind some bushes and listened.

"Cap—is it a sure thing the Queen is coming in?" asked one of the men of another on the lighter.

"Yes—the old man got her signal off the coast, carried up to him by Express from below. She'll be in here afore midnight sure. So have all handy, lads, for we must get our stowage and be around in the Kills afore day dawns!"

It was a gruff-voiced man who spoke last, evidently the master of the lighter.

"There's some smugglin' game goin' on!" whispered the old captain. "We'll wait and see. If they don't offer to go up to the house we're hunky!"

It was then not far from midnight. Within less than an hour three red lights, one above the other, were seen off in the bay.

One red, then a white, then another red lantern were held vertically on the lighter as an answer.

Quickly after that a large topsail schooner under mainsail and jib, luffed in alongside the lighter, lowered sail and made fast.

Instantly a crowd of men were heard at work—their forms could be seen only dimly, and they tumbled boxes and bales rapidly into the open hold of the great lighter.

Not more than half, or perhaps three-quarters of an hour elapsed before the lighter was loaded, almost in dead silence, and then the schooner made sail—only the mainsail and jib up as before, and stood on up the bay.

The lighter, as soon as the schooner was clear cast off, and with her huge lug-sail set, steered so as to round the southern part of Staten Island and make her way into the channel westward of the same.

"That's just the coolest bit o' work I ever saw!" said the captain, drawing a long breath. "I'll wager there's a cool twenty or thirty thousand dollars lost to the revenue by that move. It was worthy o' the old Cornwall coast in our country!"

"I'm glad it is all over! They didn't put a foot off the pier. So our quarters in the old Rookery are safe yet!"

"Ay—and will be. Smugglers never loaf about on shore. That schooner will run for quarantine, anchor and wait for her health-ticket and a visit from the Custom-house men!" said the old captain. "The last can look all they want to, but they'll find no goods that aren't on her bills o' lading."

"The lighter—where will she go?"

"Lay off to-morrow in some quiet place, and then run for her regular dock in the city, and her cargo will be carted to the men that owns it. No trouble there. Lighters are transferrin' goods from one point to another all the time!"

"It must be a good trade?"

"It is—but there's a heap o' risk in it. The revenue men are like sharks, on the scent all the time. This schooner must have dodged a cutter outside and she'll have one alongside of her in the bay when she is seen. But there'll be nothing found to hurt her or her owners. That vanished to-night."

"And now, it's so late, one o' you that's younger than me, run up to the house and see if all is quiet there. I'll go and get the boat out, for it will be near daylight afore we can get above 'The Hook,' with this tide!"

Reddy went up, returned and reported "all serene" in the Rookery. Ten minutes later the old barge was on the way up the bay under sail.

CHAPTER XII.

"GOLDEN DROPS"—A NEW MEDICAL DISCOVERY—LIVELY TIMES AHEAD.

At the dawn of day, the Quarantine lookouts notified the health officer of the port, that a large fore-topsail schooner had anchored at the lower end of the quarantine boundary, and evidently awaited for inspection.

The doctor on duty for the day had not risen yet. He was in no hurry to rise. The weight of a fat salary was upon his eyelids. The dignity of an official position was upon his broad shoulders.

What were shipmasters, passengers or sailors to him? Conveniences which enabled him to draw a salary.

After he had risen, bathed, had his early cocktail and his late breakfast, he would go off, for

no one, not even a revenue officer dared to go on board till he made his visit and declared the vessel free, or had put her under the yellow flag.

So it was nine o'clock when the health boat came alongside the Queen of the Sea.

Captain Barnacle had man-ropes over the side and stood on deck with uplifted cap, when the medical autocrat came aboard.

He had it was true been in yellow fever ports—Jamaica was seldom free from it—Porto Rico hardly ever, but he came last from Bermuda, the health-center of the known world, and he had a "clean bill" to show from the authorities there. Not a man sick, or likely to be.

Nevertheless, the doctor looked very grave and exceedingly wise. The people—the dreadful "PEOPLE" were howling through the press, about carelessness at Quarantine. It behooved him to be very, very strict. It might be necessary to detain him only eight or ten days.

"In which time my cargo of fruit would nearly all rot!" said Barnacle. "Come with me into the cabin, doctor, and over a glass of good wine, look at my bill of health once more!"

The doctor smiled and went. It is fair to infer that he smiled again, several times while in the cabin. It would be almost treasonable to hint that curious persons, who were listening on deck, heard the clink of gold-pieces down in the cabin. Some of them thought they did.

No matter. After an absence of ten or fifteen minutes, the doctor and Captain Barnacle came on deck together. Both were laughing. The wine had been pronounced excellent. A dozen bottles were sent to the doctor's boat—for "medical use only," as they say in Maine.

"Your bill of health is so clean, it will be unnecessary to detain you any longer. Here is your certificate, captain," said the doctor, handing over the necessary document and springing into his boat.

As Barnacle put his men to the windlass to hoist anchor he saw the revenue-cutter Washington standing down the bay.

Instead of keeping on and going to sea, she hove about and headed northward again, and when he made sail and headed for the bay above the Narrows, she was on the same course.

He made sail slowly, first mainsail and jib—then foresail, flying jib and topsail, and then began to gain on her though she carried the same amount of canvas.

When a little below Governor's Island the schooner and cutter were nearly side by side.

Then Lieutenant Fontelroy, still in command, hailed. Though he knew the vessel the instant he saw her, he now shouted:

"Schooner, ahoy! What schooner is that?"

"Queen of the Sea!" answered Barnacle, in a sullen tone.

"Where from and what's your lading?" came next from the officer.

"Bermuda last—fruit and vegetables!"

"Heave to. I am coming on board to look at your papers!"

"All right!"

Barnacle at once braced the fore-topsail over, rounded to till it was aback, hauled his head-sheets to windward, flattened aft the main, and by the time the cutter had done the same both vessels were at a "stand still" off the Battery.

A boat from the revenue-cutter with a full crew of armed men, the lieutenant and a Custom-house inspector came speedily alongside.

"Open your hatches! Two of my men and the inspector will take your manifest and look over your cargo," said the lieutenant, haughtily.

The manifest and a parcel of bills of lading were handed to the inspector and the health officer's pass exhibited.

The dignity of the commander of the cutter could not be lowered by his going into the hold. He paced the quarter-deck until the inspector should be ready to report.

He only spoke once or twice—once to say any craft was better in port now than she would be at sea, for a regular rusher of a storm was brewing—again to ask the length of time they had been coming from Bermuda.

When the inspector came up, almost stifled from his long stay in close-quarters below, he reported that he could only find fruits and vegetables in the ship and scarcely half as much of them as the papers called for.

"How is that, sir?" sternly asked the lieutenant.

"Easily explained, especially if you will take the trouble to look at our log-book," said Barnacle, with perfect composure.

"The fruit rotted badly, and I had to throw that which decayed overboard to save the rest! You'll find a record on the log-book—date and quantity."

"Records are easily made!" said the lieutenant. "I would like to see your muster-roll—to note the number of your crew, perhaps to ask them some questions."

Barnacle saw the drift of the inquisition, but kept perfectly cool, and had the muster-roll brought up from his cabin.

"Call all your crew aft, if you please!"

This was done, and with the roll in his hand, the lieutenant called off every name. Every

man, even the steward, now on crutches, answered.

To one name there came no answer.

Ebenezer Wilkins was called for—once, twice, thrice, without a response.

"Where is this Ebenezer Wilkins, who is on your list?" cried the officer, in sharp, angry tones.

"Again I refer you to my log-book. He deserted in Porto Rico, Island of Martinique," said Barnacle, as composed as ever.

"I believe you lie! You've murdered him!"

Quick came the words from the lips of the officer, but quicker yet shot out the broad hand of Captain Barnacle, and five feet ten in uniform lay on the deck the next second.

"Any man who calls me a liar on my own deck, drops!" cried Barnacle, for the first time showing anger.

The stricken officer staggered to his feet and drew his sword, but when he saw the officers and crew of the Queen of the Sea jump for handspikes and belaying-pins, while Captain Barnacle quietly drew a pair of cocked pistols from under his jacket, he hesitated to open an attack.

This gave the inspector time to speak.

"Lieutenant," he said, "when one gentleman gives another the lie, he must expect a reply. You've had it. That is now a personal matter between you and him!"

"I'll make it so, sir—I'll have his heart's blood, sir! I come from a stock, sir, who never allow a stain upon their honor!"

"I am at your service, sir, whenever you desire satisfaction!" said Barnacle, who was again as cool as ever.

"You shall hear from me, sir, the moment I am free from official duty. I have received a blow, sir—a blow in the face!"

"On the mouth which called me a liar. It blushes for you!"

Barnacle alluded to the blood which trickled from the lips of the officer down on his glossy shirt-bosom.

"Do you know who Ebenezer Wilkins was?" asked the irate officer.

"Yes—he shipped with me before the mast as an 'ordinary seaman.' He was quite ordinary—in fact, no seaman at all; but I kept him on duty till my steward got hurt—you see him there on crutches. Then I put this Wilkins into the cabin as acting steward. He did very well there until we got into Porto Rico. There was a scarcity of men in that port and several vessels ready to go to sea. High wages were offered. He took advantage of a chance and deserted. That is what I know of Ebenezer Wilkins. Is that enough? All my crew and officers can attest the truth of every word I have uttered!"

"Not all! The man Ebenezer Wilkins, was an officer of the Secret Service of the United States, who went on board your vessel to detect you in smuggling! We knew your vessel was built and fitted out for that purpose. I saw him on board your vessel, and exchanged signals with him when you went to sea!"

"Hand in glove with a pronounced spy. You are a great man to boast of honor! It would be condescension now on my part to meet you at all in the field. Only your uniform, not what is inside of it, would justify me. If this Wilkins was what you say, for which I have only your word, he did well to leave my vessel before I found out his true character."

"Why, sir—what would you have done, if you had known what he was?"

"Triced him up in the rigging and given him ten dozen lashes with the cat-o-nine-tails. Then t'would have tarred and feathered him and set him ashore."

"You would, eh? Ah, there comes the collector of the port in his boat. We'll see if you can face him down."

CHAPTER XXIII.

NO SURRENDER.

A BARGE, pulling twelve oars, six of a side, flying the United States revenue flag, was seen approaching the Queen of the Sea, rapidly.

The officers and crew of the schooner had laid down their hand-spikes and belaying-pins, when the lieutenant wisely returned his sword to its scabbard, and everything wore a quiet look except Mr. Fontelroy's face, when the collector, a large and very pompous man, came over the side and reached the quarter-deck.

"Ah—lieutenant, you here? And Inspector Smith also. Glad—very glad to see you so prompt in your attention to duty."

And the collector smiled blandly on both, when he spoke.

"Found a good cause for seizure, eh?"

"No cause whatever, sir," said the inspector.

"Papers all right—not so much fruit on board as called for in the bills of lading, but all accounted for on the log-book as having rotted and been thrown overboard to preserve the rest."

"Nothing but fruit on board? What does Mr. Wilkins say?"

"That's it! Now let him answer you, sir!" cried the lieutenant, sharply. "Mr. Wilkins is

missing, sir. I took that man, the captain, to account for it, sir, and he struck me in the mouth. You can see how I have bled, sir."

"You wear a sword, sir. What is it for, if not to protect yourself?"

"I *did* draw, to cut him down, sir, but he faced me with a cocked pistol in each hand."

"What? A merchant captain dare to resist an officer on duty! By my oath of office, Sir Captain, you shall suffer for it!"

And the collector turned on Barnacle with "fire in his eye," and an ocean of blood in his fat face.

"Mr. Collector, you had better get at the bottom facts from Inspector Smith, before you boil over," suggested the captain calmly. "I am a law-abiding, American-born citizen, with one uncle in the House of Representatives at Washington, and another on my mother's side, in the United States Senate. Though I am only a merchant captain, I am all white and own enough property to live ashore on if I chose to do so! You had better think twice before you pitch into me."

"Inspector Smith, will you please explain?" asked the collector, cooling down before a man who had relatives in high position in Washington.

"Yes, sir. I regret to say that Lieutenant Fontelroy lost his temper and called Captain Barnacle a *liar*. The captain knocked him down. He did nothing more, and I cannot as a man say I would not have done the same under similar provocation."

"But about Mr. Wilkins, whom I sent out in this vessel—where is he?"

"By the captain's account, corroborated by all the crew and officers and registered on the log, he *deserted* from the schooner at Porto Rico."

"Impossible! He was one of the best officers in the Secret Service. Come, captain, explain this."

And the collector assumed a very mild and conciliatory tone as he turned to Barnacle.

"I can say but *this*, sir: the man on my roll as *Ebenezer Wilkins*, who shipped on this schooner as an ordinary seaman, and whom, without knowing his true character, I put in my cabin as steward, *did desert* in broad daylight, going off on board a brig bound to sea from Porto Rico, where we lay taking in fruit. My log-book has the record."

"Strange—the man must have been crazy. Why he got twenty-five hundred dollars a year here besides perquisites."

"And shipped with me at twelve dollars a month and no perquisites, without he stole 'em. As you say, Mr. Collector, he must have been crazy."

"Captain, he came here under *official* orders. It had been reported to me that the fruit trade was but a cover for another business for which this vessel was destined. I am glad my inspector's report frees you from the charge this time. But I must remark that caution is a jewel, and now that you know you *have* been suspected, you will be careful in future to give us, who are sworn officers of the revenue, no cause of action. I would be the last man on earth to accuse you or any American captain unjustly. I will now go on shore, and you can take your vessel to her berth as soon as you please. Inspector Smith, you can go ashore in my barge!"

The collector made a profound bow and re-entered his barge. Shoving off, he headed at once for the barge office on the Battery.

Lieutenant Fontelroy waited.

"Where will your vessel lie, sir? I shall send a friend on board to arrange an early meeting, sir."

He said this in a bitter tone of hate.

"The schooner will be berthed at the first pier below the Catharine Market. Send a *gentleman*, should you be so fortunate as to possess a friend of that character!" replied Captain Barnacle. "And the sooner the better. I have some business to attend to in Connecticut, as soon as I have unfitted you for duty as a dancing-master."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"You will learn my meaning, lieutenant, when I have fired my first shot. I never waste lead. If you have a carpenter on board your cutter order a pair of crutches. You'll need them when I'm done with you!"

"Bosh! That for your threats! You'll hear from me before you sleep!"

The angry lieutenant snapped his fingers and jumping into his boat rowed off.

Captain Barnacle laughed, and turning to his first mate, said:

"Fill away, Mr. Barnard—we will get into our berth as soon as we can and report to the owners, so the fruit can be sold before it does rot. When that dandified popinjay in gold lace and broadcloth sends a friend on board I shall refer him to you. And you will accept his challenge at once—weapons, dueling pistols, distance, fifteen paces, time, if he comes to-night, to-morrow morning at nine o'clock—place, any spot above the Hook, East River side, beyond the settled part of the city, where we can go in our boat!"

"All right, sir!" said the mate, and he gave

the orders to draw sheets—fill the topsail and right the helm.

The cutter was seen taking in sail and coming to an anchor, as the Queen of the Sea dashed on up the East River.

Captain Barnacle had not to go far to report when he reached the pier reserved for the schooner.

Mortimor Monk, his fair daughter, Cybele, and her gallant cousin, Alva De Lorme, all stood on the wharf, waving hats and handkerchiefs, as the beautiful craft, stemming a strong ebb tide, took in sail in splendid style and luffed into her berth, coming as gently to the pier as if she was handled by a tow-line.

"Barnacle, you're a seaman every inch!" cried Mr. Monk. "I never saw a ship brought to a pier so deftly!"

"Give my mate, Mr. Barnard here, the credit. He had the vessel in his hands coming up!" said Barnacle, reaching out his hand to help Miss Cybele on board, as she evinced a desire to get there.

"I heard from you yesterday. Was all right below?" asked Mr. Monk, in a low tone, when he too reached the deck, aided by his nephew.

"All right—not a point at fault!" assured Barnacle, in the same tone. "I have had the honor of a visit from the commander of the cutter Washington—"

"Ah! Lieutenant Fontelroy!" exclaimed Cybele, vivaciously.

"I hope he is not a friend of yours, Miss Cybele!" remarked the captain.

"A friend—never! He has visited me, but I detest him!"

"I am glad to hear that, for I have no love for him myself!" declared the captain, laughing. "But, as I commenced to say—I was visited by him and an inspector, and last but not least, the collector of the port did me the honor to make a special visit. And they could find nothing but *fruit* on board!"

"Why did the collector go aboard? That is unusual. He has subordinates for such duty!" said Mr. Monk.

"He was very anxious to interview a Secret Service man whom he had shipped in my crew when I went to sea. He did not find him!"

"Why—was he lost overboard?"

"No, Mr. Monk," said Barnacle, smiling. "He *deserted*! It is quite a long and rather a funny story. If you will permit me to call at your house to-morrow evening I will tell you all about it. I shall be very busy till then, entering at the Custom-house, paying up the crew and officers, and seeing the cargo got out."

"We will be very glad to see you, sir. Sup with us at eight and spend the evening."

"Thank you, Mr. Monk. I have some choice fruit and some Bermuda truck in hampers saved expressly for you."

"You are very thoughtful and kind. Come, Alva and Cybele, our carriage waits up the street."

The millionaire gave the captain a parting grasp with the hand and then left the schooner.

Barnacle had not even hinted at his personal trouble with young Fontelroy.

CHAPTER XXIV.

BARNACLE AT A TARGET.

"I HAVE but half an hour to enter in—they close that department in the Custom-house at four," said Captain Barnacle to the mate, as soon as Mr. Monk had left. "I will hurry over with my papers and come back soon as I can. Furl sail and clear up decks while I am gone."

"Ay, ay, sir!" was the answer, as he hurried off, for he had all his papers on his person since he exhibited them to the inspector.

The captain was back at five and everything looked ship-shape below and aloft.

They had an early supper in the cabin, and while the captain and Mr. Barnard were at table a card was sent down which bore the name of:

"M. EPENSHEID,

Surgeon U. S. Revenue Marine."

"Invite the gentleman down," said the captain, quietly.

A portly, red-faced man of middle age, in uniform, came down and took a seat which the steward placed for him.

"You asked on deck for Captain Barnacle. I am he!" said the captain, anticipating the object of the visit.

"Auch! Yaas? Den, as I was not spreichen de Ingliss ver goot—I gif you a ledder. Dot vill say vot for I come."

The German doctor in American uniform, not infrequently seen then, as now, handed a letter to Barnacle.

It was from Fontelroy and was a savage mis-sive challenging him to fight. It closed with these words:

"One or both of us must die. A Fontelroy never forgives a blow!"

Barnacle laughed. He couldn't help it. Handing the letter to Barnard, he said:

"You are my second. Write my acceptance and the weapons, distance, time and place.

They are mine as the challenged party. Put it down plain, for this gentleman may not understand. Let them come in a boat off this pier at half-past eight to-morrow morning and we will lead the way to the ground."

Barnard and Surgeon Epensheid retired to the state-room of the former and the matter was duly arranged. When they came out, the captain had a stone jug of regular Schiedam Schnäpps on the table and invited his visitor to refresh.

The eyes of the German glittered as he looked upon the jug—he seemed to recognize its place of nativity.

"Dot is goot!" he gasped, as he emptied a full goblet of the raw gin.

"Und dot is *besser* dan goot!" he said, when he swallowed a second.

Barnacle did not offer him any more. He was afraid he would hinder him from "coming to time" in the morning.

So the surgeon returned to the cutter with the acceptance which Fontelroy craved and an assurance that there would be no child's play in the morning.

"Are you a good shot, captain?" asked Mr. Barnard, who had not seen Barnacle at practice.

"Pretty fair. I have often hung a bottle at the yard-arm at sea. My first shot at the swinging target would break the lower half of the bottle, my next take the rest close to the neck, and my third cut the string just above the neck."

"At the word?"

"Yes, I always fire at the word. Generally at the word '*one*,' never later than *two*," replied the captain. "You know I always go armed, and I would not carry a weapon I could not use! The reason I carry pistols is this:—A dear friend of mine, a sea captain, was pounded, jumped upon and *killed* by a lot of drunken sailors who thought he had wronged them, though he had not. Another, who landed with a thousand dollars of freight money in his pocket, was knocked down and robbed in sight of his own ship. And I have made up my mind never to be caught foul. If I had not had my pistols ready, to-day, that fellow, Fontelroy, would either have run me through or cut me down in his anger."

"That is so. I do not blame you for carrying weapons! Have you regular dueling-pistols?"

"Yes, as fine a case as ever were raised at the word. I would not kill that fellow for the world. But I *will* lame him for life. He prides himself on his legs. He wears his pantaloons almost as tight as his skin to show them off. I shall send a ball through his knee-cap—mark my word. He will either lose his leg or have a stiff knee that will spoil his dancing after that!"

"You do not count on being hit yourself?"

"No—for two reasons. He is too nervous to be a good shot. He trembled like a leaf to-day when I held him at bay. I shall fire at the word *one*, and he will be hit so soon he will be paralyzed. Besides I shall say something on the ground to make him blind mad, and he'll be hardly able to see me. If he should hit me it would be an accident, and I'll risk it."

"All right, captain. We may as well look the pistols over and see if the powder, ball and flints are all right."

"Certainly. I will get the case. It is in my state-room."

The examination was made and was perfectly satisfactory. The weapons were old style, saw-handles, ounce caliber, flint locks—up to the "*code*" in every point.

"Load them," said Barnacle after he had caressingly wiped them off with a clean pocket-handkerchief. "I want to see if you understand it."

Barnard laughed.

"I have been there before," he explained. "I never told you I was a midshipman in the navy once. And a middie has to fight or go to Coventry. I got on a spree, struck a superior officer, and had to resign or stand a court-martial. I knew how *that* would end. I resigned, and *here* I am. But that was my last spree! You'll never see me in such a scrape again! A burned child dreads the fire."

He loaded while he talked. And he did it right as Barnacle allowed.

"We lay stern to the open water. Put a lamp near the cabin window and lay a lemon on the bottom of an upturned goblet."

Barnard obeyed the direction. The captain took a pistol, walked to the far end of the cabin—about twenty-five feet from the cabin window.

"Give the word!" he said as he stood in position, his pistol at his side.

"Are you ready?" asked Barnard in a clear tone.

"Ready!" was the response.

"Fire—one, two, three!" cried Barnard.

Before the word one left his lips, Barnacle's hand came up, there was a flash, a sharp report and the lemon went out of the cabin window with the ball, and yet the goblet was not touched.

* A favorite target with officers in the navy. The bottle is always empty.

"You'll do. You are the quickest shot I ever saw," said Barnard, admiringly.

"I'll wheel and fire and do the same thing with the other pistol," said the captain.

Another lemon was laid on the glass, and Barnacle stood at the same distance with his back to the targets.

The word was again given and this time, turning around completely, Barnacle fired at the word "*one*," and again the lemon flew overboard with the bullet through its center, and the glass not even jarred.

"Fontelroy's dancing days are over," said Barnard, laughing.

The pistols were now very carefully wiped out, then the locks were taken out, oiled first and then wiped dry. After this perfect balls were selected, patches cut to fit and new flints put in the locks.

All this took some time, and before they were through the second mate came on board. He had been off to visit his old mother up-town.

Lying at the wharf only a single watchman was kept on deck, and no officer was required to do watch duty. This watchman had looked down into the cabin when he heard the pistol discharged, but when he heard the captain and mate talking and laughing he knew it was all right and went on his rounds.

At ten o'clock Barnacle was in his state-room sound asleep. The engagement for the morning did not trouble him.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE SLAVE-SHIP CAPTIVE.

It will not do for us to lose sight of Ebenezer Wilkins altogether. A Secret Serviceman with a salary of twenty-five hundred dollars a year and *perquisites* is quite an important personage.

"Perquisites" may be understood in various lights. A percentage on all seizures for instance. Or traveling allowances, much over traveling expenses generally. Or a sly bribe accepted now and then, when it pays best not to possess keen eyesight. Perquisites have a very broad meaning.

Wilkins had not the slightest idea his treachery had been discovered when he came off to the Queen of the Sea in the dinghy at Porto Rico.

He was spoken to by Captain Barnacle in his usual tone of kindness. And the request to carry the wine to his departing friend was made so naturally, that suspicious as he was made by his profession, Wilkins had no thought the captain meant anything but to get the wine there quickly before the vessel sailed, for men were already aloft loosening her canvas, and he heard the cheery "Heave, heave, ho!" of men at the windlass, lifting the anchor.

"Step aboard a minute till I write my thanks to send back by you!" said Captain Gregg, of the Venus, when Wilkins passed up the wine.

The steward did so, and the instant he was on the deck of the slave he was seized and carried aft, and thrust down into a deep, dark hole under the cabin floor, upon a huge pile of hand and foot shackles, such as are put upon turbulent and refractory slaves.

In vain did he cry out for freedom, and threaten that the power of the United States would be used on those who harmed him—in vain did he urge that he was the steward of the Queen of the Sea, and Captain Barnacle would go wild at his loss—he could not draw a word in reply to either threat or pleading.

All that day and all that night in that close and stifling place he lay—cursing one moment, actually weeping the next—no drink but his tears, no food but his grief.

Night and day were the same in that hole. But when he was called up, and crept out on deck, the hot sun was shining overhead and the brig staggering under the load of canvas she carried was plunging over a tumultuous sea.

"Go forward to the galley, and get some bread and coffee from the cook. Then turn to and take your place in the first mate's watch—won on its turn of duty!"

It was Captain Gregg who gruffly gave him these orders.

"If you please, sir, may I know why I am here?" asked Wilkins, humbly.

"Yes! Because I wanted you! I am short-handed. You came within my reach, and you'll stay there till this brig goes to the Congo River and back!"

"To Africa? Oh, merciful Heaven—what trade is this brig in?"

"The Black Bird trade. In short, she is a slaver. Now I have answered your questions. I ask none of you. I want no more talk. Do your duty and you'll get along with me. Offer to shirk and I'll cut the hide from your back. You are on pay from this day. I've put your name down as John Roe. Names are nothing here."

But my name is Wilkins, sir, from New York, sir—

"It is not. You are John Roe on my books, and don't you forget it. Start for the galley, or my boatswain there will help you with a rope's end!"

Wilkins started. He saw a grim smile on a ruffian face. And the man who looked at him, a giant in stature, carried an inch rope two yards long wound around his wrist.

At the galley he got a tin cup of black muddy coffee sweetened with molasses and a couple of cakes of hard sea-biscuit.

He soaked the biscuit in the coffee and swallowed it. He had not tasted food or drink for at least thirty-six hours, and almost anything was palatable to say the least.

After he was through and had replaced the empty cup in the cook's galley, a man bearded so only his eyes and nose were visible called to him:

"John Roe, you are in my watch. I'm first-mate, and you'll soon find me out. If you keep up your end in work I'll be as easy on you as a step-father. But show the first sign of laziness, and I'm worse than a mother-in-law on washin'-day! You'll do duty on the fo'castle—tending sheets, hauling down tacks and picking oakum when there's nothin' else on hand. Barney Bowker is cap'n o' the fo'castle, that one-eyed cuss yonder with red hair. Report to him and he'll keep you at work."

Wilkins reported and Barney Bowker pointed to a pile of old tarred rope cut in short lengths.

"Plank yourself,* and go to pickin' oakum now! When I call you, *jump*, or I'll break your back!"

Poor Wilkins! He felt as if his heart would break. He cursed the hour when he left a comfortable berth on shore to play the spy on the "Queen of the Sea." And in his misery he did not even dream that he had been purposely sent on board the slave by Captain Barnacle.

He had not the slightest idea that a suspicion of his real character had entered the brain of the captain or that a living soul on board the schooner knew of his intended treachery.

He could see that the slaver was short-handed, and he believed what the captain had said—he wanted hands and had secured him because the chance offered.

The African coast was next thing to death. Would he ever live through what was before him?

"Take a pull on this fore-tack. *Jump*, you lubbers, *jump*!" yelled Barney Bowker.

Wilkins jumped. One poor fellow was slow, and Bowker knocked him head over heels with a handspike.

"Bowse down on that tack!" yelled the ruffian.

Wilkins pulled on the rope with all his might. So did the other three who had hold of the tack.

"There, belay all! That'll do. Down to the oakum again, and don't a lubber of ye look up till you hear me squawk!"

Humbly the white slaves went to their tasks, for Barney Bowker never moved a step without a rope or a handspike in his hands.

Dinner-time came, and the other watch ate first—the second mate's watch, and then relieved the watch Wilkins served in, and they had dinner.

A bit of rancid pork—about four or five ounces, two hard biscuit and a pint of water in a rusty tin cup.

That was the ration for dinner. Wilkins gagged at the pork and threw it back in the kid. He soaked the biscuit in the water, ate them and drank the water. It was hot and nasty, but he could get no better.

Then he lay down in the shade of the long boat and tried to get a little sleep. In that he might for a brief time forget his misery.

He slept; but it seemed to him as if he had barely closed his eyes when he heard the boatswain yell:

"Starboard watch, ahoy! On deck, every son of a gun! On deck, or I'll help you!"

Four hours had passed, and he was again at the mercy of Barney Bowker. The wind had freshened and the brig was pitching into a fearful sea.

"Haul down and stow the flying jib!" shouted the mate from aft.

"Man that down haul! *Jump*, you cusses, *jump*!" yelled Bowker, as he stood ready to let go the halliards.

Every man jumped and seized the rope he pointed to.

"All clear—haul down!" was his order as he unmoored the halliards from the belaying-pin.

"Now run out and stow the sail—hang on with your eyelids, or you'll go overboard!"

It was a hard and risky piece of work to stow the sail when the spar went under water at every plunge of the brig into the sea, but it was done, and Wilkins and three companions came in drenched to the skin, and again went to picking oakum.

When this watch was over the men had supper.

A couple of hard biscuit and a half pint of colored warm water—by courtesy called *tea*. It was the best ration for the day. Some men could live on it. Poor Wilkins thought he would not be long dying on it.

If all his days for a long voyage were to be like this he did not desire to live. He had caused many another man to suffer, but he now

* Sit down on deck.

got an insight to real suffering himself. Some of his victims were enduring terms at hard labor in prison, but they at least were well fed.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE DUEL—FONTELROY WILL DANCE NO MORE. TOM McCORD was fishing from the rocks a little way above his cottage, in a cove from which the house could not be seen.

The form of "Mary the Mute" was visible perched on a rock that overlooked the spot where the old man was skillfully casting his line and drawing in blackfish and bass at a rapid rate. The men had all drifted off down-town, but Reddy and he had caught a bad cold the night he was watching the smugglers at the old pier down the bay, and he felt like keeping quiet in the cottage.

Suddenly a small dinghy containing two young men in nautical style of dress, pulled in from the river and landed on the rocks close by where Old Tom was fishing.

One of them carried a mahogany box, which Tom in his long experience knew at a glance to be a pistol-case.

"Who owns the land hereabout?" asked the foremost, as he bowed to Tom.

"I do, for the matter o' that, sir. You're out o' town, though inside the lines."

"You've no objection to our shooting at a mark near here, have you?"

"Not the least bit, sir," said Tom. "I'm an old gamekeeper, or was across the water, and like to see good shooting."

A cry—as of terror—broke out at that instant from the girl perched on the rock, and she jumped off and ran swiftly off through the bushes toward the house.

Barnacle had caught a glimpse of that weird face and was gazing intently at her, for he thought he had seen the face before.

"It's a poor deaf and dumb gal that I keep out o' charity at my house, and she's afeard o' strangers," said Tom, hardly able to account himself for the fright of the girl.

Another boat came toward the shore at that moment with two officers in naval uniform in it, and one of these had a pistol-case in his lap, and this drew away from the first comers all thought of the girl and her flight.

"I reckon you're going to fight a duel, young men," said Old Tom. "That is, the tools are here and the men to use 'em. I saw one duel, nigh twenty year ago. I was the only witness, and them that fought didn't know I saw 'em. They fought with swords, and one of 'em was killed in the very first clash, run right through and through. They called it a *murder* afterward, but I knew better. It was a fair stand-up fight. But the chap that killed his man had to cut and run. Poor gentleman, he died abroad, when he was really a lord and rich too!"

The approach of Fontelroy and his second, Doctor Epensheid, put a stop to further revelations from Tom.

Fontelroy was white with anger yet, and the contrast between his pale face and the florid countenance of his second was marked.

"We was brought our own pisdols," said the German doctor, "and I brought mine instruments, too."

And he laid down both cases side by side.

"You'll need your instruments—we've brought our own pistols also, tools that I am used to," said Barnacle, laughing.

Fontelroy scowled ferociously, but he did not speak. He unlocked his pistol-case and exhibited a pair of pretty silver-mounted weapons, about half the "regulation" size.

"I never use *pop-guns*! Bring out my cannon, Barnard!" said Barnacle, sneering, as he glanced at the fancy pistols in the case of his opponent.

"Pop-guns may send a bullet through Connecticut *squash*!" said the lieutenant, almost choking with anger.

"So act up and measure off the ground," said Barnacle. "This thin-legged baboon is so hungry for squash pie that I pity him!"

"Keep your pity for yourself—you'll need it in less than ten minutes!" responded Fontelroy.

"Doctor, you forgot to bring crutches with you!" said Barnacle, laughing. "I'm going to give you a case of amputation. One-legged men can't dance, and their chances to win rich wives are few and far between!"

"Curse you, hold your tongue!" shouted Fontelroy, goaded beyond endurance by the cool taunts of his adversary.

Barnacle was doing what he told Barnard the night before he would do—getting his opponent so nervous he wouldn't be able to hit the side of a barn.

Barnard gave him no time to cool off! The German doctor and he picked out a bit of level greensward back of the rocks and at once proceeded to measure off the ground and load the pistols.

Fontelroy had insisted on using his own weapon, and it was not objected to. They would not be half so dangerous as those of Barnacle, even in a cool, skillful hand.

In a few minutes the seconds called to their principals to advance and take their places.

"Don't put them slim legs in front of that row

of saplings," cried Barnacle, addressing the doctor. "I can't tell one from the other if you do!"

"You take your place and get ready to die," shouted Fontelroy, shaking with passion.

"Wait till he gets cool before you trust the poor creature with a pistol. He is so scared he shakes like a poplar leaf in a gale."

Fontelroy almost screamed out:

"Give me my pistol. If you don't hurry I'll not wait for the word."

"Yes, you will," said Barnard, handing one pistol to his principal and holding the other in his hand. "Raise your hand before the word if you dare and I will shoot you down as quick as I would shoot a mad-dog! Doctor, give him his weapon. We are ready. I have the word, remember, and I shall give it slow and distinct, so both men can take their time to aim and fire."

The doctor advanced and handed Fontelroy his pistol, cocked and ready for use.

"Are you ready, gentlemen?" came next from Barnard, who had retreated some distance to keep out of range of Fontelroy's shot.

"Ready!" answered Barnacle, firmly.

"Read—Ready!" stammered the lieutenant.

"Fire, one, two, three!"

At the word fire the pistol of Barnacle came in a line with his eye and at the same instant it was discharged.

A yell broke from the lips of Fontelroy as the word "one" left Barnard's lips, and his pistol not yet up to a horizontal position went off, and the ball tore up the ground not three yards in front of him.

"I'm ruined—my leg is shattered at the knee!" groaned the lieutenant, as he sunk to the ground.

"Poor devil. I'm sorry for him, but he brought it on himself," said Barnacle, approaching the wounded man.

"Keep off, you devil—keep off! Don't come near me!" screamed the wounded officer. "I hope you are satisfied now. You have mutilated my form, crippled me for life, if I don't die from what you have done."

Tears rolled down his pallid cheeks while he spoke.

"I must get him off to the ship quick, and I must have help in the boat," said the bewildered German doctor, as he knelt down and put a tourniquet on above the knee.

"We are willing to aid you in your boat or to take it in tow!" said Barnacle.

"Curse you, I'll die here before I'll accept help from either of you!" screamed the sufferer.

"I'll run to my house and get a good boatman to help the doctor," said Tom McCord, who had been an intent looker-on while the affair progressed.

"Right; I'll go with you and pay him for the job," announced Barnacle.

"No need; he'll take no pay in a case like this. I'll be back in less than five minutes."

He ran off as swift as he could, for he did not want strangers in his house just then. He thought of the "Weasel" and the possibility of the girl disguise being penetrated.

And he was fearfully uneasy when he saw that Barnacle did follow him, though at a slower pace.

Reaching the house he found Reddy and the boy there, the latter white with fear.

"Where be they? The bloke in that boat is the same cove I priggled the ticker from when I knifed the cop!" (The man in the boat is he whom I robbed of his watch when I killed the officer.)

"Quick! Open the trap and send him out o' sight. The man is coming—almost here," cried McCord.

Reddy opened the trap and the boy-girl hurried down. The trap had just been replaced, when Barnacle entered the house.

"Here is the man I spoke of. He'll help to row the Dutch doctor and the man you hit to their ship!" said McCord.

"All right! Where is that little girl that ran off when we landed?" asked Barnacle.

"Off in the woods somewhere, pickin' flowers. She doesn't stay in the house half the time—I don't know where she is. Would you like to see her?" asked McCord coolly, though his heart was full of vague fear.

"Yes, I take a deep interest in deaf and dumb children. I have a sister-in-law, a sweet and good girl who is a mute. Besides, I fancied I had seen the face of this girl, somewhere before."

"Well, I'll look around for her after we've seen that poor chap off in his boat. Every minute is like an hour to him, now."

"You are right, old man. We'll see them off and then we'll look for the girl. If I can do anything to better her condition, I will be glad to do it."

"Thankee," said the old man, worried beyond measure by the persistent desire of Barnacle to see the girl whose face fairly haunted him.

CHAPTER XXVII.

WAITING FOR THE MUTE.

AFTER seeing Reddy and the old captain carry the wounded officer carefully into the boat he came in, and the former row off with the

German surgeon, Barnacle and Barnard returned with McCord to the cottage.

The latter knew well that the "Weasel" would never stir from the vault until called up by him, so he did not hesitate to invite the two merchant officers in, for hours would pass before the other men would come in from town.

Pretending to wait for "Mary the Mute" to come in, the old man set out his bottle and glasses, and acted in as friendly a manner as he knew how, so as to disarm any suspicion Barnacle might have formed in regard to the girl or the place.

McCord asked no questions in regard to the duel or its cause, probably thinking he would be questioned less himself if he did not show any interest in the affairs of the others.

Barnacle finally lost patience waiting to see the girl, and rose to leave. When he did so he laid a five-dollar gold-piece on the table to be applied to her benefit, and Barnard put another coin down to keep it company.

Then they went out, and McCord went with them as far as their boat.

"We are going to have a tremendous storm inside of eight or ten hours!" remarked Barnacle, like most sailors ever watching weather signs. "See those crows—they fly very high and yet you can hear their shrill cries. They head to the north-west. The storm will come from that direction. And rain will come with it. See the leaves turn under-side to the wind, and how silvery they look. And the dash of the waves comes loud on our ears. The sun will set in clouds, if the storm hasn't broke by that time!"

"Good! I like storms!" exclaimed the old man, with an elated look. "If there is any music I like better to hear than the dash of rain on a roof when I am inside snug and dry, I don't know it."

"It isn't so pleasant when you have to turn out of a warm berth and face it in a four-hour watch on deck!" said Barnard, laughing.

"I should think not. Though I've crossed the ocean once and expect to again, I'm no sailor!" said the old man.

"Take a few voyages with me and I'll make you one," said Barnacle, with a laugh.

"Ah, cap'n, I'm too old for that. When I can sell out here I'm going home to old England to die! America will do very well to live in, but English-born folk, like to die at home, and I'm one of 'em!"

Barnacle now got into his boat with Barnard and rowed back to his vessel.

McCord got a good position on the point and watched to see they did not return.

Then he went back to the house and called the "Weasel" up from the vault.

"You little brat, you'll ruin us all yet if we don't get away from here!" snarled the captain.

"That face of yours is there, no matter what dress you may have on."

"I'm not to blame for my face," whimpered the child. "Wasn't it made when I was? And I didn't make myself, did I?"

"Can't say as you did. But luck is all ag'in' you—don't you see? Now, to-day that chap whose watch you took and who saw you when you knifed the officer, happened here to fight a duel and you happened to be right where he had a good square look in your impish face. If you hadn't been dressed as a girl, he would have known you in a minute. As it was, he knew he had seen you somewhere, but bein' you was a girl, he couldn't exactly place you. But he was bound to see you again."

"Fought a duel, did he? Why didn't the other cove kill him?"

"Because he was the best shot. He had his man down before the other could pull trigger."

"Good! Then one of 'em was killed?"

"No, only crippled! He'll lose a leg!"

"Bah! If he had only been killed I could have gone and seen how a dead man looked! Only broke a leg—what a botch! 'Twould have been just as easy to hit to kill."

A couple of men, Sammy was one, now came in from down-town.

"Cap, do you know it's a-goin' to storm afore long?" said Sammy. "That's why we came back so soon."

"I know it, cully. And I'm glad you've come. I want all hands in. That Beekman street job must be done to-night. We have got to get out o' here. I've had to keep the kid there in the vault nearly all day. The man he robbed the night he killed the cop was here in this very room to-day. He got a look at the Weasel's face, and if he hadn't been in petticoats he would have known him in a second. As it was, he couldn't keep away, though the kid was hid in a few minutes, and he'll come again if we stay around which we would be fools to do."

Already the wind had begun to blow in fitful gusts from the northwest, and though no rain-clouds were in sight, there was a damp chill in the air which foretold a heavy downfall in the near future.

One by one the men came in, Reddy last of all. He had remained on the cutter to see the leg of the unfortunate duelist amputated by the German doctor. He had received a ten-dollar gold-piece for his services and was quite well pleased with his trip.

He too had noticed that a storm was brewing and felt like the rest elated at the thought their big job would now be taken in hand.

Masks, weapons, felt shoes and burglars' tools were now gathered up, a hearty meal taken and, then they only waited for the storm and night to come on.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A DESPERATE MAN'S DESPERATE ACT.

Two weeks of misery on the Venus, had worked sad havoc on the once strong and lithe frame of Ebenezer Wilkins. The rations being for men used to coarse fare, were unfit and insufficient. Added to this, hard work and brutal treatment or the constant fear of it, tended to break Wilkins completely down. Only the certainty that the least delay on his part to obey an order would bring a handspike to his head or rope to his back, kept him on his feet at all. He grew weaker day by day, and the knowledge that he soon would be exposed to the dreadful jungle fevers of the coast disheartened him utterly.

"I shall not live through it," he said, talking to the man Ramsay, the first and only friend he had made on board.

"You never will, if you give right up," said the other. "Bear up and hope for the best. We've not got to the coast yet by a long ways. And there are cruisers under the English and Yankee flags looking for these fellows all the time. Can't you see our captain is afraid of 'em? He keeps a man at the mast-head a-lookin' out from daylight to dark. And at night not a light is allowed above deck except that in the binnacle. We may fall in with a cruiser and be captured any day. Then if we can make 'em believe on board the truth, that we were here by force and not as willing men, we're saved, don't you see?"

"I see and hear, but I have no hope," said Wilkins gloomily.

Even as he said this, the lookout on the fore-topgallant cross-trees, shouted:

"SAIL HO!"

"Whereaway?" cried the first mate who commanded the watch on duty.

"Three points off the weather-bow, sir," was the answer.

"What rig?"

"Can't make out, sir. She is in the wake o' the sun and hull down yet."

"Keep your eye on her and see if she rises, or gets closer."

"Ay, ay, sir."

Ramsay had looked at Wilkins. The color had come back to his thin face. His wan and weary eyes brightened. Hope, even faint, had touched his sinking heart.

"On deck there!" again cried the lookout.

"Well! What now?" cried the mate.

"There's two sail instead o' one on the weather-bow. They're close together—so close I only made out one at first. I think they're square-rigged."

"All right, keep your eye on 'em sharp."

The captain had come on deck at the first shout.

He took a spy-glass, slung it by its lanyard at his back and went aloft himself. He was up there some time, and when he came down his face looked dark and angry.

He had cursed the lookout for not seeing another sail to leeward of their course.

The last was on the lee-beam.

"How do things look, sir?" asked the mate when the captain came down.

"Bad," was the answer. "We're not in the regular track of trading-vessels. The two to windward are men-o'-war sure. If that chap to leeward is o' the same kidney, our legs are all that'll save us. We may as well change our course a bit and see what the others do anyway."

The brig under all sail up to royals, except she had no studding-sails set, was heading her course with the wind a little forward of the beam. She now was steered off to the westward more, for she had been going east of south before. Her yards were squared and the studding-sail gear was got ready for use.

Wilkins had sprung to his work like a new man when Barney Bowker gave orders now. Every vein in his body seemed infused with fresh life.

Despair had not taken entire possession of him yet. Ramsay, grim and rough as he usually was, now smiled and told him in an undertone:

"It isn't time to say die yet, is it?"

"No—no. If they only can come up to us. Gregg will not dare to fight!"

"No—he is short-handed and only has carronades at any rate, to use at close quarters if the natives proved treacherous on the coast!"

The wind was not very fresh. The vessels to windward, coming down almost dead before it, seemed to have more, for they rose rapidly.

The vessel on the lee beam rose also, for she seemed to have hauled on a wind. But as the brig went ahead she would naturally fall off on the quarter, the way both were standing.

Gregg now stood off square before the wind.

He set studding-sails below and aloft—put on every kite he could fly.

The vessels first seen were nearly astern, the one last discovered in a position which he could head-reach, he was sure. She was now well on his lee bow, but he was going through the water very fast.

The danger lay astern, for the craft there rose slowly but steadily, and their dark hulls could be seen from half-way up the main rigging.

"If we can only keep out of gun-shot till night we'll dodge them in the dark!" growled Gregg.

He ordered up an allowance of grog for all hands at dinner-time and doubled the ration.

He wanted men fit for work now or never. And he wanted to get work out of them, too.

Scarce as water was, two large butts were started forward and pumped out, and the caronades all run aft and secured to bring the brig by the stern, her best trim before the wind.

The breeze which helped those astern soon reached the brig, and she had all her spars could buckle to when it came.

Gregg strode up and down the deck and rubbed his coarse hands in glee, as he shouted:

"See the old girl dance over the water! She's a beauty without paint! Get up extra stays on the maintopmast. It buckles too much—d'ye hear, Ransom?"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

And the mate at once sent men aloft to bend extra stays to the mast-head, while others set them up below.

The log showed fourteen knots when it was tried, and the vessels astern were surely dropping a little.

"That sneak on our lee bow is a clipper to go!" said Gregg, after a while, for not only a dark hull, but tall, raking spars were now visible.

"A corvette and a Yankee—but he'll never get in gunshot of us!" said Gregg, after an inspection through his glass.

Wilkins heard him, and the faster the slaver sailed, the slower beat his heart. Hope began again to fade away.

"Can't we do something to cripple this craft?" he asked of Ramsay, in a whisper.

"Yes—and get our throats cut from ear to ear!" said the latter. "If it was dark we might cut away something, but in daylight it would be worse than madness to try it."

The day wore on and the breeze freshened, so in spite of his desire to carry sail, royals and to gallant studding-sails were taken in on the brig.

The American corvette was hanging on the lee beam yet, edging slowly up, but not gaining perceptibly.

There was no danger now from the vessels astern. They were hull down. Two hours more and night would throw the veil of darkness on the water.

A second glass of grog was served out to all hands. For all hands were on duty now and every man expected to jump at an order.

Suddenly from a fresh lookout aloft came the startling cry:

"Sail ho! Dead ahead!"

"Curses on our luck, if another man-o'-war is there!" cried Gregg, as he sprang aloft with his spy-glass in hand.

"In with the studding-sails, below there!" he shouted, before he had been aloft one minute. "Then be ready to luff and brace sharp up! We've no other choice!"

"Jump—you lubbers, jump to halliards, sheets and down-hauls!" yelled the mate. "In with the larboard studding-sails first!"

"Lower away, haul down and rig in the booms!"

The men worked like tigers, and soon the great sheets of flying canvas were in on the port side and stowed. They were too short-handed to do as they would on a man-of-war, have all in at once.

Working as hard as they could under the influence of fear and grog, it took full fifteen, if not twenty, minutes to get in the studding-sails.

Then the lee braces were hauled in and the brig was brought up on a wind. All too suddenly, too, for that breeze, for snap went the main-royal-mast, yard and sail hanging a wreck as she came up, while the lee rail was literally under water.

"In with that fore-royal while we can save it!" shouted the mate, while a half-dozen men sprang aloft to clear away the wreck on the mainmast.

Again the guns were changed to trim ship and on her new course the brig drove almost bows under.

"A cursed Yankee frigate dead ahead as we were standing!" growled Gregg, when he came down from aloft. "If we get clear of this scrape we'll have Satan's own good luck. It's a regular nest o' men-o'-war over here!"

The brig, on her new course, brought her first pursuers almost dead to windward and bearing down on her.

Gregg knew this, but night would be on him long before they came within gun-shot, and he would dodge them all he thought. He was a man of wonderful nerve, he had escaped many a

peril before, and he would never give up while there was a shadow of hope.

Supper—double rations and a third glass of grog all around before dark—came as the next order after all was snug on the new course.

Wilkins grew strong, and as he grew strong he became desperate. It was escape for him now, or, as he felt, certain death for him on the coast if the brig got away.

A fearful plan came into his head—one he dared not even trust to Ramsay. It was a terrible death if it was not a success. The sea was high, boats could scarcely live in it.

If darkness came and the brig, guided by her commander's cunning, got away, he was lost at any rate. So Wilkins swore, in his desperation, that darkness should not hide the brig from her enemies or his friends.

The instant darkness became dense Gregg, who had taken the bearings of the men-of-war just before night closed, changed his course by compass.

Not a light was allowed on deck. Silence, fore and aft, was ordered. Sheets were eased up, braces rounded in, the brig rode easier as she went off a little free.

Suddenly—without an instant's warning—a fierce flame shot up from below. It came from the forward hold where great piles of oakum were stowed, close by the oil and paint locker, and it shot up twenty feet high almost at the first outburst.

"Fire! Fire! FIRE!"

A terrible cry to be heard at sea—one to appall the bravest.

"To your buckets, men. Hard up the helm, and put the brig before the wind!" shouted the captain. "Don't give up, men—out with the fire or we are lost!"

And he was the first to dash water on the flames. Others sprang to the work, Wilkins as eager, apparently, as the rest, to cover what he had done. For this was his work.

"The ships in chase will know where we are now!" he chuckled, as he stumbled and fell with a bucket full of water in his hands.

"Get out of the way, you lubber!" yelled Barney Bowker, snatching the bucket from his hands and kicking him brutally.

It was a terrible struggle. The flames caught the foresail and flew higher yet.

"Clew up the foretopsail and to gallantsail!" shouted Gregg. "If they catch—good-by old Venus! Pass up the water. Aloft here a half-dozen of you and help me!"

And right in the face of the flames he jumped into the weatherfore-rigging to fight the fire ere it got aloft.

Madly he and his best men struggled, but the canvas, the tarred shrouds were ablaze—there was scarce a hope at first, and it faded as the flames shot higher and higher.

At last, scorched, blackened, wild and cursing like a fiend, Gregg saw man after man give up, and he got down through the fire to the deck.

"Keep her before the wind and get the boats down if you can!" he groaned. "The old brig is doomed!"

And he wept like a whipped child. Every one had been so hard at work—so full of excitement, that no one had for a second paused to ask how the brig got on fire.

The mates now hurried to lower the two quarter boats—the long boat was already on fire forward. Some of the men were obedient to orders, others despairing rushed to the cabin to get drink to drown their terror in.

Wilkins worked as he never had worked on that vessel before. It was for life now or never.

Suddenly, close on board out to windward, the tall sails of a ship were seen.

"Take in that after sail—take it in and we'll try to save your crew!" came in a shout through a trumpet.

"Let halliards go by the run!" shouted the first mate, for Gregg would give no orders now. "Clew up—but don't shift the helm!"

The way of the brig was lessened but not stopped. To port the helm a-lee and bring her by the wind would force the flames right into the faces of the crew.

The two boats were lowered, but they swamped as soon as they touched the water.

"We have life-boats! Round to—it is your only chance. Round to, throw over floats and jump overboard. We'll pick you up!" shouted the officer on the man-of-war.

"Down with the helm—it is our last chance!" cried the mate.

The brig, a mass of seething flame forward, came around under the helm and after sail, but the flames rolled aft in a solid sheet as she luffed.

Screaming and yelling, most of the officers and crew leaped into the water, for life-boats were seen toppling on the waves near at hand.

All but one. That was Captain Gregg. He was seen on the taffrail of his brig almost reached by the flames, and heard shouting his hate and defiance to the man-of-war's men now busy in picking up all who did not drown instantly of the crew.

Suddenly there was a blinding flash, the flames had reached his magazine, and Gregg and his vessel went to destruction together.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE SPY IN SNUG QUARTERS.

WILKINS and his friend Ramsay were side by side when they leaped into the water from the burning slaver.

Both were good swimmers, but a tremendous sea was running and it was hard to keep up in the heaving surges. But they worked for life, and avoiding collision with several poor wretches who were drowning, at last attracted the attention of the crew of one of the buoyant life-boats sent out to the rescue.

They were so nearly exhausted when drawn into the rescuing boat, that Wilkins fainted dead away, and it was not till hours had passed that he had life enough left in him to learn how he had been rescued and where he was.

When consciousness fully came back, he learned that he was in the "sick bay," or hospital ward of the United States sloop-of-war, John Adams.

An assistant surgeon was near when he spoke and asked where he was.

"In a better place than men in your business deserve," said the officer. "You are on board of an American sloop-of-war with about half the officers and crew of your burned slaver. We have had a hard time bringing you to, and I don't know as you'll be very thankful after we've landed you at Sierra Leone!"

"I am not a slaver, sir—that is I did not belong to that accursed brig."

"Tell that to the marines. Sailors will not believe you. Most of your men, the two mates especially, came out fair and square and say they *did* belong to the brig Venus, a regular slaver, which has made no less than ten successful trips to the coast under the same captain."

"But I and another man I know of, one Ramsay, were forced into service in the brig. I was acting steward of the New York schooner Queen of the Sea, in Porto Rico, and was sent to the brig with a present from my captain, and kidnapped aboard, thrown into her hold and kept there till she was at sea."

"A very pretty story for a man to tell, who is just out of the jaws of death," sneered the officer.

"Merciful Heaven! What more can I say? Ah—where are the clothes I had on when I jumped from the brig?"

"They are on the deck yet—they have not been taken up to dry as they must be."

"Please, sir, there is a vest there of ribbed velvet—dark maroon color. If you will get it for me I will prove all I say and more. I am a commissioned *Secret Service* officer of the United States Treasury Department!"

"The man is crazy," declared the surgeon, and he turned away apparently in disgust.

"Sir! If it had not been for my own desperate act to escape leading a slaver's life, the brig would now be off free in the darkness. I set fire to her with my own hand rather than let her escape, for I knew I would die if I remained on board. I am covered with the marks of abuse I received on her."

"Cursed lubber—you shall die! Now I know how the brig got afire!"

It was the first mate of the slaver who had got a broken arm from a falling spar ere he left the brig and was in a berth near where Wilkins who spoke lay. And, snatching a case-knife from the table with his unwounded arm, all unrobed as he was, he sprang at Wilkins with the ferocity of a tiger.

Had not the surgeon and several attendants sprung between them he would have killed Wilkins on the spot.

The latter in his alarm tried to leave his bed and fell over on the pile of wet clothes.

While the other men struggled to secure the enraged mate Wilkins saw his vest and with a cry of joy seized it. From an inside pocket he produced a leathern pocket-book and, wet though it was, took out the commission he had spoken of with the great seal of the United States upon it.

The surgeon looked at it, heard the ravings of the angered mate, who in his wrath let out the fact that Wilkins, or John Roe, as he called him, had been a forced man on board, and began to believe Wilkins told the truth.

And giving orders he should be protected in his absence from any of the real slavers, the surgeon hurried with the commission in his hand to report to the captain of the ship what Wilkins claimed to be and to have done.

The captain instantly sent for Wilkins, ordering him to be provided with dry clothing and made fit for appearance in the cabin.

The surgeon gave him some wine and a dish of broth to strengthen him, and as soon as he was dressed in a dry suit of seaman's clothing from the store-room he was taken to the cabin and subjected to a rigid examination.

He told his long and surprising experience from the hour in which he was sent by the Collector of the Port of New York on board the Queen of the Sea to detect her captain in the act of smuggling to the moment when, in his despair, he set fire to the oakum in the slave-brig, when he believed she would escape in the darkness, as she most certainly could have done, but for his desperate act.

His papers attested his official claims, his

story was probable, his treatment on the slaver attested by Ramsay who also had been kidnapped on board in Porto Rico, and his nerve in facing a horrible death to destroy the brig was appreciated.

"You will berth in the ward-room in the purser's mess, Mr. Wilkins, till I meet some ship bound home," said the commander kindly, when satisfied of the reality of Wilkins's statements. "Your evidence is conclusive as to the business of the brig and were she from an American port, her officers and crew should be sent home for punishment. As it is, all we can do is to land them at Sierra Leone, where you will probably have to make a sworn statement of what you know. Meantime be on the lookout, lest some of the slave-crew, like that mate, try to kill you. I will instruct my officers to have them watched closely. Anything you need will be promptly furnished by the purser!"

"Thank you, sir!" said Wilkins, happy in his almost wonderful deliverance. "My greatest desire now is to get back early to New York. I suppose the Queen of the Sea will have made her voyage successfully before I can get there, and probably may make one or two more. I think she had goods on board not on her manifest when I left, but I cannot prove it!"

"Do you think her captain had anything to do in getting you carried off in the slaver?"

"Oh, no, sir. I cannot believe that. He seemed to trust me implicitly and showed no suspicion of me. I had the free run of his cabin, could inspect his papers. No, sir—that Captain Gregg, who died rather than to fall into your power, was a perfect fiend. He was short-handed for his voyage, and would have men, no matter how he got them!"

"Well—you ought to be best posted. You have had a terrible experience. Few men could live through it!"

The interview now ended and Wilkins found himself berthed among gentlemen, where his adventures made him a hero.

His chances to get home were the next thing to think of.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE BEEKMAN STREET MANSION—BURGLARS AT WORK.

WHEN Barnacle and Mr. Barnard, his mate, returned to the schooner from the dueling ground they found Mr. Monk and his cashier on board, ready to pay off such officers and men as desired their wages.

"Your voyage has been a complete success, captain!" said Mr. Monk, talking apart to Barnacle. "The goods are in store from the lighter, and not a shade of suspicion has been shown by the authorities so far. My cashier has placed one thousand dollars to your personal credit over and above your salary, which you can draw whenever you desire!"

"You are too generous, Mr. Monk!"

"No, sir—only just to your merits. Where have you been so early?"

"Off on a little gunning trip, sir!" said Barnacle, with a laugh. "You were not aware probably that I was challenged to a trial of skill by the lieutenant in command of the revenue cutter?"

"Ah—young Fontelroy?"

"Yes, sir."

"How did it turn out?"

"He has been carried on board the cutter with a shattered leg. He will not dance again, I am thinking!"

"Was it a duel?"

"Yes, sir. He challenged me and wanted very much to kill me. He was too slow and has suffered for it. I could not tell you last night before Miss Cybele about our quarrel. He called me a liar on my own quarter-deck, and I knocked him down. He challenged me and has got a bullet through his knee in consequence."

"I do not blame you, captain. And yet, I regret that we are brought into such prominence just now. I hope you will soon be ready for another voyage."

"Within a week at most, sir. I have a dear old mother up in Connecticut that I want to see—also to meet my brother if I can. Meantime Mr. Barnard here will have the old cargo out and the new in. Yes, sir—within a week or sooner."

"Good! Do not forget you are to spend the evening at my house. Come early; my daughter and nephew count upon it."

"I will be there, sir. We are going to have a blow from the northwest, but the Queen will not feel it in this dock."

Mr. Monk now left, but his cashier remained on board to attend to his financial duties.

Long before night black clouds flew wildly overhead from the northwest, and the prospect of a fearfully stormy night was strong.

But Barnacle, used to all kinds of weather, did not heed a few warning drops of rain when he started for Beekman street, but he was glad to have reached a sheltering roof, when just as he entered, the rain came down heavily, while the wind rose to a howling gale.

"Better here, my good captain, than out at sea on a night like this," said Mr. Monk when he welcomed the captain into his large, well-

furnished sitting-room, where the fair Cybele and young De Lorme were in waiting to receive him.

Cybele had been reading an evening paper, aloud to her cousin when he entered, but she laid it on the center-table as she rose to respond to his salutation.

"Crue!—crue! captain! I do not know that I ought to take your hand, after it has done what the paper says it is guilty of!"

Cybele was smiling while she spoke, and the captain knew she was not serious in any condemnation of his conduct. She went on:

"Mr. Fontelroy had such handsome limbs. And he was so proud of them. And the paper says you purposely lamed him instead of killing him, as you might have done, with his intent outspoken to kill you."

"I did not wish to send him to an early grave, fair lady, but I had to leave him a remembrance that even a merchant captain can possess skill in the use of weapons, as well as feelings as a man of honor. He provoked me greatly in the outset and intended on the ground to kill me if he could."

"So the paper states—it gives you great credit for your forbearance, and I know you deserve it. I suppose I ought to pity the fellow, but he was such a consummate fop, I lose my sympathy."

"He may sober down into a useful man, with a wooden leg," said De Lorme. "He will have time to think a good deal before he gets around. He will lose his command for the time at least."

"And claim a pension for wounds received in service," said Mr. Monk. "You promised to give us a history of the affair and what it started in."

"It started in his disappointment in not having the chance to seize the Queen for defrauding the revenue. It seems the collector, with the knowledge of Fontelroy, got a Secret Service agent shipped on board with me as one of my crew. The object was to watch what cargo I took in and learn where it was landed, and thus to catch me in smuggling."

"The fellow was a cunning rascal, and managed, by cruelly crippling my steward, to push himself forward and to get his place in my cabin. That done, he could get at my papers, by picking the lock of my private desk. He did this when I was on shore in Porto Rico, found your letter of instructions and copied it!"

"What?" cried Mr. Monk. "Have the authorities got a copy of that letter? If so, I am ruined."

"No, Mr. Monk. The copy this fellow took I found and destroyed within a few hours after it was taken. Having, by the faithful watch of my crippled steward, discovered the real character of the man and his foul treachery as a spy while I was heaping favors on him—I determined he should learn a lesson. A slaver was in port, just ready for sea, bound to the coast of Africa and short of hands. I knew the captain and told him where he could get an able-bodied man without trouble. I sent this agent—his name was Wilkins—alongside the slaver with a present of a dozen of wine. The captain, in a peculiar way of his own, persuaded Mr. Wilkins to step on board and then kept him there while he got under way and went to sea. I had no choice but to mark Mr. Ebenezer Wilkins in my log as a deserter. And so you will see it recorded!"

"Ha! ha! A wisely-concocted plan to get rid of a most imminent danger and a sneaking rascal. So this Secret Service man is now on an African voyage. It will be long before he is seen here again, if, indeed, he ever turns up!"

Mr. Monk laughed heartily over the cunningly arranged disposal of the spy.

The call to supper was now heard. The room where a luxuriously spread table was set was in a rear wing of the great mansion, and the family, as well as their guests, could plainly hear the terrible down-pour of the storm.

Mortimor Monk was a good liver, and everything choice that money could command from the markets was found on his table. They sat quite a long time at table, for conversation ran on unchecked while they all enjoyed the good things before them, and time was not counted.

After supper they returned to the sitting-room, where Cybele, skilled in music, assisted by her cousin, who was a fine flute-player, helped to entertain their guest.

The captain, as it grew late, wished to return to his vessel. Mr. Monk would not hear of it.

"I would let no one—not even a stranger—leave the shelter of my roof in such a storm!" he said. "My nephew, Mr. De Lorme, has a chamber adjoining his at your service, and there you sleep this night, or I shall feel seriously hurt!" and the merchant spoke with hospitable energy.

The captain could not refuse to stay till morning under such circumstances, so after awhile when Mr. Monk retired to his chamber on the same floor and Cybele excused herself, the two young men went up-stairs in the next story to smoke a cigar and retire.

It was an hour after they left the sitting-room before they were ready for bed, for they had a

good deal to talk about and De Lorme had to hear all the particulars of the duel.

"How fearfully the wind blows, and the rain seems to come in sheets," said De Lorme, as the muffled sound of the City Hall clock or that of St. Paul's tolled the hour of twelve.

"Yes, it is a hard night for men of my class off the coast," said Barnacle. "Yet many such a night have I passed at sea and many more may I look for!"

"What—what is the matter, uncle?" cried De Lorme.

Mortimor Monk, in his dressing-gown, his face very pale, entered the room in his bare feet.

"Hush! do not speak loud!" he whispered, hoarsely. "Arm quickly and come with me. There are burglars in the house! I heard them at work on my great treasure vault. I thank Heaven, Captain Barnacle, you are here!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

TERRIBLE EVENTS—THE VAULT OF GOLD AND SHOWERS OF LEAD.

"TAKE off your shoes, you must go still as death to surprise them and fire on them before there is a chance for resistance. There are several, for I heard them talking. I was abed and nearly asleep when my chamber door was opened by that traitress Eliza, Cybele's new maid, who is in with them. I did not move or speak, for I wanted to know why she was there at that hour. She came near the bed and satisfied herself I was asleep I suppose, for she went out. I rose and followed and heard them at work on the vault. Here is a pistol, captain, I have two."

And Mr. Monk showed a pistol in either hand while he spoke.

"I have weapons of my own, that I am used to, for I am never without them," said Barnacle, stooping down to bare his feet.

Young De Lorme took a pair of loaded weapons and a large dagger from a drawer, and was also ready in a moment to descend.

"Let me lead the way. I am young and very quick in shooting!" said Barnacle. "We must not give the watchers the least advantage."

"True—go on, we will follow close as we can keep to you," said the millionaire.

Down the carpeted stairs the three crept as still as they could move. The turmoil of the storm at its height was enough to drown almost any noise.

In a minute or so, they were at the door of the great library in the side of which the vault was built.

A low murmuring noise and the click of iron against iron reached the ears of the three armed and determined men.

Cocking their pistols, one to each hand, they paused an instant, then Barnacle threw the door wide open and sprang into the room.

A group of men—they did not pause to see how many—were gathered about the great safe, the doors just forced open. 'Lize towered on their right, holding up a lamp, for the rest to see by.

Firing both pistols in the crowd, Barnacle sprang toward the woman who drew a knife from the bosom of her dress, just as De Lorme and Mortimor Monk poured in their fire.

So sudden was the surprise and attack that but one return shot was fired, and that by one of the ruffians as he fell. It did no harm.

"Forward—spare not a man! Kill the robbers. Kill them all!" shouted the old millionaire, as he rushed on brandishing a club which he had also brought.

At this instant old Tom McCord rose from the vault into which he had been looking, and when he saw the face of Monk, he screamed out:

"It is he—the Lord of Strathmere! I saw his sword pierce the heart of Lord Eggleston, close by the castle moat!"

"Horror—who—who are you?" cried Monk.

There was no reply, for 'Lize dashed down her lamp and in the darkness grasped the hand of her father and dragged him away, while she cried out:

"Fly, father—fly with me, while there is time. The whole house is alarmed!"

In a second both were gone, for servants came rushing to the scene, with lights, and of the burglars only the dead and dying were there.

Cybele Monk, clad only in a dainty night-dress, her face white with terror, came among the others, and shrieked out as she saw her father sink back against the wall:

"Are you hurt, dear father? Ah—he will faint!" and she sprang to support him.

"Here is a girl—a mere child among the gang," cried De Lorme, who was bending over the men who had fallen in a group. "I wonder if she too is killed?"

"Yes—cuss ye ail, yes; but thar's one more to my list!" squeaked the vicious "Weasel," as he drove his knife deep into the thigh of De Lorme, then sunk back gasping, the blood pouring in a stream from a wound through the breast got when the rest were fired on.

"Heavens! It is the girl I saw up the Island!" said Barnacle.

"I'm not a girl—I'm a boy-devil! Oh, if I

could only kill *you*, too!" moaned the dying fiend.

De Lorme, fearfully gashed, had to be attended to, and Barnacle at once sprung to his aid, while one servant ran for a doctor, and another to alarm the police.

It was a terrible scene—four men stone dead, another, Reddy, dying and helpless, while the disguised boy was quivering in the last agony.

The vault doors open—money-bags and silver plate exposed; but the ruffians who had come to get it weltering in gore, all but the bold leader and the girl who had opened the doors to admit them all—they had escaped.

Barnacle, by an improvised tourniquet, a handkerchief twisted tight by his knife-handle, had checked the hemorrhage in De Lorme's thigh, and held it back till a surgeon could arrive.

The latter came, and almost at the same time the chief of police and a platoon of his men.

"What have we here?" he cried in wonder, as he saw the dead and dying, the masks and burglars' tools and the open vault.

"The last o' the Night Hawks!" groaned Reddy, in a faint voice, and now he like the disguised boy was recognized by Barnacle as the man he had seen up the Island the day before.

"No—a man and the woman escaped!" said the captain. "But I know where to find them!"

"No you don't—you'll never see them again!" cried Reddy; "they'll be over the sea, where—where I wish— Oh, Lord—it's no use!"

The blood gushing up through his throat choked him. Shot through the lungs, he had bled internally at a fearful rate, and now came the end. In a few seconds he was gone—he spoke no more. And the boy, ferocity yet in his glazed eyes and the bloody knife gripped in his thin, bony hand, was stone dead when the chief dragged him out from among the others to get a look at him.

Yes—the smallest, youngest, yet the most dangerous of all the band—there he lay at last, defiance in his close-drawn lips; his last act had been a murder if he could have risen up to strike for the heart.

"That is the boy who killed the policeman at the Pewter Mug," said Barnacle. "Tear off that false hair, that and his dress only prevented me from knowing him yesterday."

"Mr. Monk—is he hurt?" asked the chief, for Cybele stood by the side of the old man, bathing his head, for he had fallen back in a great arm-chair in a state of almost helplessness.

"No—no. The excitement has been too much for me," said the millionaire. "That is all. No one but my nephew on our side seems to have been wounded."

"Yet you made terrible work with the burglars," said the chief. "Four, shot through the head—died instantly."

"Yes—they were taken by surprise, when all were huddled in the mouth of the open vault. I cannot see how even one escaped."

"He was down on his knees, clutching at the money—I saw him rise after we fired," said Barnacle, who was the coolest of all the party. "I can put you on his track I think, sir. The girl called him father. She has been the chief worker here—located the treasure, and then let in the band to secure it."

"I will see you alone, sir, to get your information," said the chief. "The leader must not be allowed to escape, or the girl either."

"I don't care for *their* arrest now—they are foiled, let them go. The terrible fate of their comrades will punish them," said the millionaire, seeming yet utterly unnerved.

The words uttered by Tom McCord—the names he spoke, seemed to have almost overthrown the old man's reason.

"Justice wants them, and will have them sooner or later," said the chief.

Again he looked in the weird face of that fiend-boy and thought of his dream, when a hunchbacked man led the boy before him.

"If one dream has come true, the other will also," he said to himself. "I shall yet find that young Englishman."

He now gave his men orders to move the dead bodies over to a room near his office in the basement of the City Hall, where they could be kept for an inquest and identification, and then he went apart with Barnacle, and from him learned where Tom McCord and the disguised boy and the man Reddy had been seen by him the day before.

"I will be there in an hour, though I hardly hope to find him or the girl there," was the reply of the chief when Barnacle asked if he thought the burglar had gone to the house he had claimed to own.

After the bodies were taken away, and the vault closed, for the locks had been skillfully picked, not broken, the servants were left to tear up carpets and remove blood-stains.

For no one could sleep in that house that night after the occurrence of the tragic events we have described.

These severed arteries in De Lorme's leg had been taken up, and he, weak from the loss of blood, was taken to his chamber.

There Mr. Monk, Cybele and Captain Barnacle also gathered, to comfort him and talk over the fearful events just passed.

"You all heard the words of the man who es-

caped—the man whom that ungrateful girl Eliza called father?" said Mr. Monk, interrogatively.

They all bowed assent.

"He called two names—one was Strathmere. Once I had a right to the name and title. A fatal event—it was *not* a crime—drove me from home, name, a chance of title and fortune. That man named it. In a duel—a fair duel, foot to foot and blade to blade—I slew the false man he named, Lord Eggleston, and had to fly my native land, for, as I believed, I had no witnesses and it was called a murder. But if this man, recognizing me, has spoken truth—there was a witness, and he could tell the facts that we met and fought as men of honor fight. I would not have him arrested if I could see him without and know what he could or would say. I would forgive his bold attempt—ay, I would give the entire contents of that vault to stand fair in name and character once more on my own soil, with that dear child, Cybele, by my side! For no better blood courses through a maiden's veins in all England than she can boast of."

"Now—of all of ye, ask *this* favor. You only of those then present, now living, heard the words of the man. Breathe not of them to a living soul until I give ye leave. The time may come—oh, sweet Heaven, grant it!—when I can stand forth before the world as I *am*—not as a fugitive under a false name that dares not claim what he knows to be his own!"

"Fear not—your secrets are safe, sir!" said Barnacle, the first to speak. "And if I can discover this man and get him to speak, I will do so! But in my belief he will not remain in this country if he can get away without danger of arrest!"

"Thanks, good captain. Now will you not try and get some rest? I will watch beside my nephew!"

"Thank you, no, my kind sir. I will go over to the head-quarters of the police and see if they traced the fugitive pair who escaped. As you can see, day is dawning. Time has gone rapidly with these stirring events."

"So it has!" replied the old man. "So it has!"

Taking the hand of De Lorme and saying he would come in often as duty would allow him, Barnacle now left, bowing low to Cybele, whom he looked upon as almost too beautiful to be earthly.

Going direct to the office of Mr. Hays, he found that the latter was yet absent. With a large squad of policemen he had driven in carriages to some point where he hoped to intercept the chief burglar and his daughter.

"I will wait for him!" said Barnacle to the officer in attendance.

And dropping into a chair, he fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXXII.

PETER SLUDGE TURNS UP.

FOR two good hours Captain Barnacle slept in his chair at the office of the chief. When he woke the chief had just arrived and the sun was shining, for the storm had broken.

"What luck? Have you found McCord, as he called himself? Most likely a false name."

"No," said the chief. "I went to the house. The night of the murder I was there before, looking for the boy. And did not suspicion the old curse. He was the coolest crook I ever met. The house was vacant when we got there this morning. I and my men searched it from top to bottom. We found a trap-door and a passage through it to a vault below. House and vault empty, though every sign told they had just been vacated. That vault communicated with the river. The gang had a boat. It is gone. And wherever that boat is, you may be sure McCord and the girl are not far away! I do not give up getting them both. Every vessel bound off the coast will be searched. All conveyances also out of town. It was an isolated gang. I think *all* were in the burglary, and of course all are gone but those two."

"It looks so," said Barnacle. "If you find them, will you please send me word on board my craft the Queen of the Sea, near the Catharine Market?"

"Certainly, sir; I will do so."

A visitor came in at that moment, announcing himself as an attaché to the office of the British Consul-General.

He handed a note to the chief. The face of the latter flashed up with a glow of pleasure.

"My second dream has come true!" he cried out. "Peter Sludge has turned up alive and sound."

As Barnacle did not know anything about the "dreams" Mr. Hays spoke of, or anything about Peter Sludge, never having heard the name, he went about his own business and left Mr. Hays to attend to his duties.

The latter hurried over to the office of the consul where he found young Sludge, just landed from his late involuntary voyage. He had improved in coming home, so that he was now in fair mental and bodily condition.

He told his story with little circumlocution, for Hays told him he wanted facts only and them in a hurry. He had no time to waste—no taste for romance.

The young man went through all his experience so far as he could remember.

"Do you think you would know the two men whom you saw first after you landed from the packet-ship?" asked Mr. Hays.

"Yes, sir. I am *sure* I would."

"Then come with me."

He took him over to the room in the City Hall where the dead burglars lay side by side. The black wig had been taken off Reddy's head and his short red hair was visible.

Sludge looked at each man when told they were thieves who had been killed that morning while committing a burglary.

"That's one of the men!" he said, pointing to Sammy. "And this one 'ere, though his 'air 'as been cut shorter, is the one who did the most o' the *talking*. He is the one who introduced me to Hinglish George at the Black Swan. There's where I was drugged and robbed, and he was the man who put me on the ship!"

"We will go to see English George then before he gets a hint you are in town!" said Mr. Hays.

And sending two of his men in disguise as seamen there first, so as to be ready to seize the old bruiser should he try to escape, Mr. Hays followed leisurely with young Sludge.

To see if the memory of the young man was good, he went to the pier where the packet lay when the former landed, and told him to take the same route he had gone over when he landed and was met by the two thieves.

This Sludge did, after a little hesitation when he reached Front street. But when he reached the place where he met the two men, he knew it and went right on without hesitation to the narrow alley leading to the hostelry of English George.

Up this to the house, and on inside with the chief by his side.

English George was furnishing the two disguised police officers with some ale, and had his back turned when Mr. Hays and young Sludge entered the place.

Hearing footsteps he turned around and instantly recognized his late victim. With staring eyes and open mouth he stood for an instant speechless.

Then, seeming to realize his danger, he started toward the back door, but was stopped in a second by the customers whom he had just served, while the chief put his hand gently on the immense arm of the landlady, who had started to go out *front*.

"What d'ye mean by this *houtrage*?" she screamed, as the grasp of the chief tightened when she strove to break away.

"Harrest 'er! Harrest 'er, sir! There's my watch and chain and finger ring on 'er now!" cried Sludge.

"Ow hever did you get back 'ere?" groaned the old bruiser, when he found himself cornered. "So you know this young man?" the chief asked, when he saw that George had committed himself.

"Yes—I've *seen* him afore! He was brought in 'ere by two crooks. They got 'im full of lush and then cleaned him hout. That's all I know habout 'im. They told me they'd shipped 'im off hout of the country. That's 'ow I come to wonder at seein' 'im 'ere!"

"The man who shipped him off was named English George. He got his advance wages and signed a *receipt* for the money, and here it is!" thundered "Old Hays," as he held up the paper which Sludge had got from the captain, and brought back for proof.

"Mercy. I'll give hup all I got hout of 'im!" cried George, completely cornered now. "Old 'oman, 'and over the ticker and hother stuff. I honly got a third o' the thousand pounds, and I'll pay it hover now, right on the nail."

"See you do it—and be quick. I'm this man's friend and my name is Hays."

"Hold 'Ays. Susy, we're gone hup," groaned George. "Get all the swag we took from this chap and it may make it heasier for us."

His wife thus addressed, took a box from under the bar and produced the very funds—or the portion they had received, which had been taken from Sludge. Also his watch and jewelry.

"It is all, most likely you will ever get, since there was nothing on the bodies of Reddy or the other man," said Hays, addressing Sludge, as the money and other things were given up.

"The *bodies*, did I 'ear you say, sir?" cried English George.

"Yes. Reddy and five of his gang were killed last night while in the act of burglary."

"'Orrible. Why, there isn't but two left of the 'ole lot."

"You knew them, then?"

"Yes, sir—they used to come in 'ere for a bite and a glass once in a while."

"Where did they stay?"

"Somewhere hup the hisland—I never was to their 'ouse."

"That'll do. Get ready to go to quod. These men will take you and your woman there."

"But I say, Mr. 'Ays."

"Well—*what* do you say?"

"Make it as heasy as you can for hus with the judge, sir—'cause as you see, we've shelled

out this cove's money and given you no trouble."

"I'll remember it," said the chief quietly. Then as if a new thought struck him he added: "Captain McCord and his girl 'Lize of that gang—'Night Hawks' they call themselves, are the ones that got away. If you set me on the track so I can find them, I'll see you get clear. There's a big chance for you, my man."

"Yes, sir—hif I honly knew 'ow to take had-vantage of it. But I've never seen nothink of the girl and 'im honly three or four times. Hif I 'ear of 'im you shall know it."

The chief had to be contented, so he left his subordinates to take the two prisoners to jail, while he went with the delighted Sludge back to report his success to the consul.

The latter had to acknowledge at last that the police were of some use, and as Sludge had money enough left to get to England with, it was decided he should go there as soon as English George and his woman had got their deserts, in court, for his evidence was needed at their trial.

The chief went back to his office quite elated. Though he had not captured the burglars, he had them on his hands and he had trapped English George, who had been suspected, but never before got into a corner from which there was no escape.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

IN THE OLD ROOKERY.

WHEN 'Lize McCord saw that all of the men were down but her father, even the little Weasel, she took advantage of the instant astonishment of her father's recognition of Mortimor Monk caused to dash out her light and drag him out of danger. For he was that desperate he would have staid and fought to the death but for her.

He was outside the house and in the full strength of the drenching storm almost before he knew it.

"The boat—where is it?" she cried in his ear. "Speak! We must be there quick, or we, too, are lost! The police will be out almost in a breath!"

"Come—I will go to the boat. She lies hid below here!" he answered.

And he started on with her on a run, both hand in hand.

In a little while, in the corner of a dock where some sloops and schooners were moored they found the boat, cast her loose, got in and pushed off.

They were soon out in the East River and lucky for them the tide ran ebb furiously helped on by the wild northwest gale.

The rain yet poured in torrents, but they did not heed that. The moment they were clear of the wharves the old captain got the mast up. He knew the wind would upset them in a second if he tried the whole sail, but putting 'Lize at the helm, and telling her to keep the boat steady with the wind on her quarter he got up just a yard or two of the jib and then lashed the rest down to the short boom.

Even under that little bit of canvas the boat fairly flew through the water, and as he passed the light on Bedloe's Island, then those below on Staten Island and last at Quarantine, he began to exult in a belief that he and his child were safe, if all the rest of the gang were gone.

He hardly spoke all the way down, for he had taken the helm as soon as he got the sail up, for 'Lize did not know where to steer.

At last, a little before day, the old pier was reached, the mast lowered, the boat drawn a way under the old wharf, and then he led the way to the "Rookery" with his daughter.

Not until they were inside the house out of the storm and he had fastened the front door and in a room close-shuttered and secure in the rear of the building did Tom McCord speak.

Then he struck a light and drenched and exhausted sat down on a bench by a table and bowed his head on his hands and wept.

'Lize looked at him in wonder, but she did not speak. She could not understand his mood now. Generally his nerve was as tried steel. Now he was all broken down.

She looked around. There was a cupboard in the rear part of the room. She went to it and saw that bread, cheese and cooked meats were there—also a bottle and some glasses.

She uncorked the bottle, found by its scent it contained rum, and pouring out a glass she took it to her father and touching him gently on the shoulder, said:

"Drink, dear father! You need it!"

"No, girl! All the drink in the world will not lift me up as I feel now. Day and night for weeks on weeks I've studied over this job. I have dreamed of it when I slept—thought of nothing else when I woke. Success would have made me rich and we would have gone home to lead a new life, to be happy! We have failed, and that with millions before our very eyes—my hands on the bags of yellow gold!"

"It could not be helped, father. What brought those men on us I cannot dream. The old man slept when I went to his room. The others had gone to bed on the upper floor."

"Yet they woke—they stole in on us and before one of the boys could cry 'Ware-hawk!' or

draw a weapon in defense they were shot down. I saw all were gone or I would have staid if there was one chance in a thousand! It is too bad! Too bad!"

He wept still, but when 'Lize brought another glass of liquor for herself, he drank off his, for they were shivering from cold and wet.

Then she hunted around and found some dry clothes for him, and from a chest selected a suit of men's clothing for herself.

It was dry, and she knew that now, if ever, disguise was necessary for her. For no doubt the police would hunt everywhere for her father and herself.

She got a pair of shears and made her father cut off her long, luxuriant tresses of glossy hair. And the change was so great that only eyes of one so fond as he would have known her. Tall for a woman, she looked like a youth of twenty or more, sturdy and strong, and she felt more safe in the change.

After dressing, when the light appeared, and the storm began to abate, they ate some food and then talked over their situation.

"How much was there in the treasury when you and the rest brought it down here, father?" she asked.

"Over ten thousand pounds in gold and silver, and a good many watches, and some plate and jewelry," was his answer.

"A fortune, for us two, taken care of!" she said. "If all the rest are dead, as I feel sure, for every one was shot in the head but Reddy, I think, and he right through his body, there are none to claim a share from us. It was not enough for all—but we could live on it a lifetime and never know want!"

"That is true, if we can get away with it!"

"There is no *if* in the matter. We must, father!"

"We will be hunted for high and low. I'd stake my life old Hays has been through the 'Nest' up the river before this hour, vault and all. I shall never dare to go there again!"

"No—that would be too risky. But from here could we not board some vessel going to England?"

"Child—every ship will be searched for months 'most likely. The best we can do is to lay here in quiet hiding till the hottest of the search is over. Then, well disguised, I will get up to the city, or to some near port, and buy a small vessel, just large enough to carry us to Bermuda, or the West Indies near by, and in her take our treasure, and go where we can safely get a passage home."

"It will be so hard to wait here all alone!"

"Not so hard as to be caught and put to pounding stone up the river."

"That is so!"

And Eliza went to the front of the house, where she could get an occasional glimpse of sails going in and out by the ship channel. It was poor comfort, but the best she could find. Not a book, not a newspaper, not a thing to occupy her mind, but to talk with her moody and desponding father.

"We must get the news in some way," she said. "We must know if all the band are dead. If one lived he might weaken and put the cops on our scent. I cannot rest till we hear something about the work done last night."

"It's a long tramp, but I might get a paper in some place far up the shore," said the old man. "Maybe I'll try."

"Where is our treasure hidden, father? Is it in this house?"

"No—'Lize. You see that cedar, with a dead top, off to the south there—a hundred yards, or thereabouts?"

"Yes—I see it plainly—it is a good landmark—no other tree in sight like it."

"Due west from that tree twelve measured feet, four feet under the sand, three wooden chests contain it all. Do not forget it, should anything happen to me."

"I will not, my father. But if evil comes upon you I shall be with you to bear my share. I will never desert you!"

"I do not fear it in life, 'Lize. But in our life death comes when it is least looked for. Don't you need rest? I do. When night comes we may want to look around."

"On what, father? Nothing can be seen but bushes and sand, and ships and boats in the distance. Oh, it will be like death to have to stay here long."

"Maybe our stay will be all too short. That Hays has the scent of a bloodhound. He has seen and talked to me—no disguise now would save me if him and I met!"

"Father, what did you mean last night when you called Mortimor Monk Lord of Strathmere?"

"I spoke his real name and title. You saw how it threw him all aback. He had a pistol raised to shoot me. When I spoke his hand fell."

"Yes, and it gave me the chance to get you away—the only chance, and I made the most of it."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

WILKINS ONCE MORE—DEATH CLOSE AHEAD.

AFTER rescuing all that could be found of the burned slaver's crew, the John Adams was hove to and waited in the vicinity for day to dawn,

to see if any more human beings might yet live clinging to a spar or some fragment of wreck.

And a singular incident rewarded the commander of the sloop-of-war for doing so.

The form of a man lying prone on a part of a cabin or deck-house was seen among a lot of spars and planks, and a boat was sent to examine it. The man was dead, burned and bruised greatly, but his dress and appearance told that he was no common seaman. So the body was brought on board, and then it was recognized as that of Gregg, the late captain of the brig.

On his person, a large sum of money in bills of exchange on a firm in Rio Janeiro was found, also diamonds of great value, a heavy purse of gold, and the papers of the Venus. A letter from his owners, stating where he must land his next cargo, was also discovered, setting forth beyond any doubt, if one existed before, the character of his vessel.

Two English vessels, a frigate and corvette, hailed the Adams and got the news. They had been the two first in chase of the slaver, and their commanders regretted she had not been captured instead of being destroyed.

They, like the Adams, were under orders to cruise in the track of slavers bound to the coast, or from it, and so when asked when they expected to be homeward bound, could give no certain time—they waited orders.

This made a poor show for Wilkins to return to his post of duty. And he chafed at the delay. He supposed he had been marked down as a deserter on the rolls of the Queen of the Sea, and what his superiors would think of it, was a conundrum he could not solve.

He had the freedom of the ship, but he did not go far beyond the protective influence of the ward-room or cabin, for many a dark look from the survivors of the slaver crew told him his chances would be poor if once they could lay hands of violence upon him.

The first mate, whose hate was the most intense, and probably redoubled by his suffering, never saw him but to curse him. His broken arm had mortified and only amputation saved his life. He would have refused the operation, but he said he would not die till he had killed Wilkins, for he laid all his misfortunes and that of his comrades to the former.

When cautioned about such threats, he said he had "a fetish"—an African amulet, and it told him that sooner or later Wilkins would fall into his power, and his "fetish" never lied.

Wilkins of course heard of this, and was very cautious never to expose his person where a sly blow might reach him, though the mate himself was so helpless that except he was confined to the sick bay under the usual restrictions, no other guard was placed upon him.

The most quiet of the rescued slavers were allowed the liberty of the deck—some who were ugly and obstinate were kept forward and never allowed abaft the foremast.

The corvette had a certain time to remain at sea, then she was to run into the port of Sierra Leone and report to the commodore of the American squadron, who made that the point of rendezvous.

And there, Wilkins was told, almost always, was to be found some vessel homeward bound, and in one of these passage for him to New York would be secured.

There was little to lighten the dull monotony of life at sea for the next week or two, but twice strange sails were sighted—one was chased two days and nights and almost gotten under fire, but she escaped at last in the night. The other sail was a friendly man-of-war, and beyond exchanging greetings, added nothing to the interest of the cruise.

At last the time set for the cruise drew to a close, and under a cloud of sail the corvette bore away for port. Her officers and crew were full of joy, all expecting letters from home when they got in and a chance to send letters already written.

It was a happy hour for poor Wilkins when he heard the glad cry of "Land ho!" from aloft, and when from the deck he could see the shining sands of Sierra Leone dead ahead.

There were several vessels at anchor in the port, among them the single-banked frigate which bore the blue flag of the commodore.

The wind was light, but the vessel moved gently, steadily on, and Wilkins, standing aft, felt almost as happy as if he was home again.

"What are those black marks in the water—they look like rocks, but surely the water is not shallow there?" he asked of a lieutenant who stood by his side, pointing off to leeward.

"Sharks—sir—the fins of sharks! The seas here are full of them! No coast in the world is so infested as that of Africa!"

Wilkins shuddered. He had seen a few of the terrible man-eaters in the West Indies, but nothing like this. To bathe or fall in water like that would be to meet certain and horrible death.

As they neared the harbor, a very pretty bark, flying American colors, was seen standing out to sea. Her course would bring her within hail of the sloop-of-war.

"Mr. Wilkins," said the commander of the latter, "I shall hail that vessel, and should she prove to be homeward bound, I will risk sending you on board and explain to the commodore your peculiar position here when I see him!"

"Oh, sir—how can I thank you?" cried Wilkins, hastening to make what slight preparations he could for the change.

He had but a change of clothing to bring on deck and then he was ready, if the vessel should indeed prove to be bound for New York or any port near that city.

The bark had an old and rusty look about her hull as if she had been out in a hot climate a long time, but she was neat in rig, prettily sparred and looked well aloft.

As she approached within a half-mile or so the sloop-of-war clewed up top-gallant sails and thus showed a desire to slacken speed to speak the other, and the bark was seen taking in her light sail.

When near, the corvette threw her main yards aback, and the bark rounded to under her lee.

"What ship and where bound?" shouted the American officer through his trumpet.

"Sally Crabtree, from the coast, with ivory and cocoanuts, bound to Boston!" was the answer.

"Will you take a passenger, a United States revenue officer, home with you?—a liberal passage will be paid!"

"Ay, ay!—hurry up. Don't want to lose this wind!" came the answer.

A boat was instantly lowered from the Adams and Wilkins, with a word of thanks and a glad farewell to his friends, sprung to enter it.

At that instant a yell like that of a wounded panther rung through the ship—an arm strong as a band of iron encircled the waist of Wilkins, and quicker than thought the one-armed mate of the slaver leaped with him into the sea!

CHAPTER XXXV.

"FROM THE FRYING-PAN INTO THE FIRE."

THE corvette's boat was just drawing up to the side ladder as the mate went head first into the sea with his victim.

When, a few seconds later the two men, struggling, rose to the surface, two strong men grasped Wilkins by his arms to drag him into the boat, and at the same moment the mate made a convulsive leap and uttered a horrible shriek, for he had been seized by sharks beneath the water, and as the monsters tore him limb from limb, the sea was reddened with his blood.

"Take me on board the barque, quick!" gasped Wilkins, to the boat's crew.

He was sick at heart and almost paralyzed with terror. His escape from a horrible death with the maniac mate, seemed like a miracle.

His clothes-bag was passed into the boat, and in a few minutes he was alongside of the barque and on her deck.

"Steward, take the gentleman below to change his clothes. I see he has had a bath!" cried the captain of the barque, as Wilkins reached the deck.

"Excuse me, sir, I must get my vessel off on her course—I will see you by and by!" he added, as he ordered the helm hard up, main-yards braced in and head-sheets drawn, top-gallant sails set again, etc.

Wilkins was shown into a state-room, and there he hurried to change his clothes. While in his room he noticed that a strange effluvia seemed to pervade the ship, and he heard a remark passed between the steward and some officer in the cabin which filled him with a vague terror. He made up his mind on the instant not to divulge how he happened to be on the sloop-of-war, or what he had gone through or done since he had left the Queen of the Sea. And events soon proved that it was his wisest course.

When he reached the deck a full half-hour had elapsed, and looking back he could barely see that the John Adams had furled sail and was at anchor.

The barque, under all the canvas her spars could spread, was going to sea with wonderful speed.

The captain had turned the command of the deck over to one of the mates on watch and was now at leisure to speak to his passenger.

Wilkins, glancing over decks that were far from clean, saw a large crew of active men, in which Lascars, Chinese, Malays, Portuguese and Spaniards predominated, though a few were Americans and English.

The officers seemed all to be Americans.

The captain, a tall, bony, muscular young man, seemed just rough enough to control such a mixed crowd, for when he gave an order the air fairly rung with his stentorian notes.

Turning to Wilkins, now, he said:

"I didn't dare refuse to take a passenger when that man-o'-war captain asked me, for fear he might get suspicious and come aboard to look into my hold. But I didn't want you for all that, but now you are here I'll treat you well and share the best I have. We are countrymen. I come from a section where the principal fruits are onions, 'taters and pumpkins, and

codfish dried the staple next to pork and beans. You are a Yorker, I take it!"

"The next thing—a New Yorker by residence, a Jerseyman by birth!"

"Well, Mr.—I haven't your name yet."

"Wilkins—Ebenezer Wilkins, captain!"

"Ebenezer? Why my handle is the same as yours. My name is Ebenezer Short—short by name but long in stature—six feet two in my stockin's, when I wear any! I'm a *leetle* sorry to have to disappoint you, Mr. Wilkins, on one point. It will be a long time before this craft ever pokes her nose into Boston Harbor, though I told the cap'n of the sloop-of-war I was bound there! When I said we were Boston bound, I had no idea he was going to ask me to take a passenger."

"Where are you bound, sir?" asked Wilkins, trembling for the answer which he feared would come.

"For Bahia—the Paramassa River, coast of Brazil, to land one hundred niggers now in my hold! The best lot that ever left the coast, well fed and well cared for, and they'll go ashore healthy and prime!"

"Negroes on board, and you just out of a free port and from under the guns of half a dozen men-of-war?"

"Exactly! In the audacity of the thing exists my safety. I was short of water and ran boldly in and got a supply. The water is on deck in casks, you see, and I never broke hatches in the little time I was there. I went ashore and 'bought' a clearance and health papers from the Custom-house and port surgeon, so I've papers to show if a man-o'-war should get near enough to me to want to see 'em. I'm *fixed*—you bet. I said I had a cargo of *ivory* and cocoanuts. So I have! You'll see 'em when I turn 'em up by-and-by, twenty-five at a time, to get their grub and drink. I feed 'em on boiled rice, hard bread, and a pint of water three times a day. I don't do as other men in the trade—crowd three or four hundred into the space where I put one hundred, and lose half or two-thirds going over, besides half-starving 'em on the voyage. Every nigger I land will bring me four hundred silver dollars. He cost me about seven or eight dollars in old trinkets, powder, lead, rum and cotton cloth. It's a big profit—enough to make a Christian shut his eyes to the sin o' the thing!"

Wilkins could hardly speak. Though not so bad off as before, he was not only on a slaver again, but on one with slaves really on board. That accounted for the peculiar effluvia he had noticed on going below.

"You will put me on the first vessel you see that is homeward bound, will you not?" he asked.

"I shall not speak a craft betwixt here and Bahia if I can help it," said Captain Short. "There you'll find vessels bound to the States with coffee, sugar, indigo and such things every week or so."

"Then I must be content," said Wilkins, with a sigh.

"That's *right*. Take things as they come. That's my motto. In a little while I'll be feeding my fresh batch o' darkies. You'll see *ivory* then! They grin all over when they get up and snuff the fresh air and poke down rice and hard-tack. It is better than they got in the jungles."

A few minutes later the captain gave the order:

"Lift the after hatch—get the grub ready, and bring up the first batch."

The cooks brought huge pans of steaming boiled rice and baskets of hard bread on deck from the galley and a man stood by a water-butt with a pint pannikin in his hand.

At the word, twenty-five stout, healthy-looking blacks, most of them naked, all men, streamed up from one of the ceiled compartments in the hold. As they ranged in a circle about the cooks, each slave was given a pan of rice that would hold full a quart, and three large biscuits. They ate ravenously, and when all were through, they were marched past the man at the water-butt where each man got his pint of fresh water to drink.

They were allowed twenty minutes on deck for eating, exercise and fresh air.

Then that "batch," as the captain called them, went below and another came up to be treated in the same way.

"This is what I call treatin' 'blackbirds' *human*," said Captain Short, when all the blacks had got through and gone below. "They get this three times a day—at sunrise, noon, and sunset. It is money in my pocket to feed them up. They land strong and fit for work the minute they're on shore, and I get my price in consequence. And then I've no sickness on board. We're all old hands in the business and never catch the fever."

Had Wilkins been less annoyed by his situation he might have been amused by the manner in which the captain tried to justify his business. But Wilkins was too wretched to think of anything but his continued run of misfortune.

Would he ever get home? From the moment he had got to work on his duty as a spy nothing but hard luck had met and overwhelmed him.

Twice his life had been in imminent danger—he had seen more misery in a month than he had known before in a lifetime of five-and-thirty years and—the question was—would it ever end?

One thing he made up his mind to: If he changed to another ship he would know *what* she was before he went on board. If he did not, he argued, his Jonah-like luck would next put him on board of a pirate.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

PLOT AND COUNTERPLOT.

WHEN the collector of the port read in the papers the sensational account of the duel between the lieutenant commanding his cutter and the captain of the Queen of the Sea, he was very indignant.

The idea that *his* officers should be crippled by those of merchantmen, touched *his* dignity as well as that of the service.

He actually went on board the cutter and soundly scolded the officer for lowering the dignity of his position by the encounter. Even the indignity of a blow, he argued, could not be remedied by that course. It should have been resented on the spot.

Of course another officer took command of the cutter, and the suffering lieutenant was sent to the hospital.

From that point as soon as he grew composed and settled to his fate, Mr. Fontelroy wrote a long and, as he believed, a very touching letter to Miss Cybele Monk, bewailing his inability to continue his visits to the mansion where he had been so kindly entertained and so intensely charmed. Hard as his fate was, he said in conclusion, it was hardest of all to think he had suffered at the hands of a base *plebeian*, the vulgar captain of a merchant vessel, whom he ought not to have noticed, or condescended to meet.

When Cybele read this letter, she was very indignant. She instantly inclosed the letter back in the envelope, and also a note in which she said:

"If Lieutenant Fontelroy had been aware that Captain Barnacle was a dear and valued friend of Miss Cybele Monk, he might have spared himself the trouble of exhibiting his malicious ignorance of what constitutes a gentleman. When the brave captain condescended to meet the liveried flunky of a despised service, whom he had already smitten and chastised, he did an undeserving person too much honor."

It was a bitter dose for the crippled officer to swallow, but he had to take it as it came. He had called for it, by his letter, and he got it.

"If ever I can get around on duty again, I'll hound that man to his death," he vowed, as he literally gnashed his teeth over that chilling response.

While all this was going on, Barnacle and his mates had seen cargo discharged from the schooner, her sails all looked over and her standing rigging set up anew.

Wood, water and provisions were procured, and as the old crew remained on her, the stowage of these was soon accomplished.

All was ready for cargo and it had not been decided what to take, or which ports should next be visited, when the news came that flour had risen in Cuba to fifty dollars a barrel, in consequence of scarcity, several of the regular traders to the ports in that island having been wrecked on their way out.

Flour at wholesale was but five dollars a barrel then in New York. The news fairly drove New York merchants wild—the speculation fever hit them hard.

It was out of the range of Mortimor Monk and his firm, but he knew the speed of his clipper schooner would enable her to be first in port, and though near twenty ships were loading flour he had the Queen filled up and dispatched inside of twelve hours after the news reached him.

This suited Barnacle to a dot. His return cargo was to be sugar, coffee and fruit, all duly entered on his manifest, but he was also to get in a lighter load of the choicest cigars in market, on which was charged a very high duty. These last were to be met by the lighter at the old pier and thus come in duty free.

The one trip, if successful, would more than pay the cost of the schooner and her fit-out. And Barnacle, ably seconded by officers and crew had no doubt of success. There was no Wilkins on board to annoy him. His old crew and officers had remained, as we said before, and were all true.

When the collector learned that the Queen of the Sea had started on her voyage—it was from seeing her clearance—he issued orders to the officers of both cutters on service in his departments never to let her enter the port without a search. If other vessels were neglected, she was marked for special surveillance.

"I would give half my year's salary to catch the vessel and captain!" he said bitterly, when he issued his instructions.

And a clerk, who had been well paid before for private information from that source, told this to Mortimor Monk within less than two hours after the words had been spoken, and in his own house.

The old millionaire often consulted his nephew

on his business moves, and going to the room where the young man was yet confined to his bed, he talked it over in the presence of Cybele.

"If both cutters are outside, one far down the coast, and the other cruising close to Sandy Hook, it will be hard for him to get in unseen to the usual point, if indeed it can be done," said the old man.

"Why not get word to him to run up to Montauk outside and coming down the Sound, outwit them? Then he could come to his pier before they knew he was near—for he could pass the health officer at New London if it had to be done! For excuse he could say he overran his reckoning in the Gulf Stream. He would get a good reason and have his extras out, before an officer could get on board!"

"To get that word to him is impossible!"* said Monk. "He will sail on his return before any of the slow-going craft now bound out will reach him, I fear. His last words were, he would sell out and be back before some of the other flour-laden ships got there!"

Cybele spoke:

"Father—my little yacht, the Zephyr, is a beautiful sea-boat. If my dear cousin will spare me, when it is near time for the Queen of the Sea to get back, I will run down the coast and going below the cruising-ground of the cutters be sure to intercept and warn him!"

"It is too long a voyage for you, dear child!"

"One I would delight in, father. You know how I love the sea. I could carry your signals, night and day, so he could not miss me, since his orders are to sight your private signal-station on the coast."

"True—you could!" said Mr. Monk, thoughtfully.

"I will go, father. Alva says he will go to the sitting-room to-morrow. And he will be far better before I have to go. My duty as nurse will be ended then."

The old man smiled on her fondly.

"You are a brave, dear child!" he said. "I will think of it. And I will also write him instructions in cipher and he may get them. I will in my letter tell him to look out for a message off the coast below!"

"Tell him to look out for a yacht with a white hull and the letter Z on her burgee."

He smiled and again said:

"I will think of it!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

JONAH AND HIS TROUBLES.

"How came you to tumble overboard, when you were leaving the sloop-of-war, Mr. Wilkins?" asked Captain Short, when he was at dinner in his cabin on the day they left Sierra Leone. "I saw them grappling you into the boat and that you were soaked when you got aboard here!"

"A crazy man on the sloop-of-war, who had an insane hatred of me, seized me and leaped into the water with me as I went over the side!" was the answer Wilkins made. "Poor fellow—the sharks got him while I was saved!"

"Why, I didn't see him go in. I thought I heard a yell, but supposed it was your cry of alarm!"

"I had no time to cry out, sir—I was in the water quicker than thought and the men dragged me out the second I rose. The sharks had hold of him then! It was horrible to hear him shriek. It makes me sick to even think of it!"

"Sharks are bad in these waters. The sea is full of 'em and they're always hungry like my niggers!"

"Cap'n, the wind has hauled out dead ahead—can't lay our course by five points!"

The mate on watch came to the cabin hatchway and made this report.

"Blast the luck! Well, we can't help it. We can't make our wind as they do in a steamer! Lay her on the port tack, off-shore, and keep her as near the old course as she'll lay!"

"A head wind and a calm would be as bad as death to us if they lasted long. It doesn't take many weeks for thirty men on deck and in the cabin, and a hundred blacks in the hold, to run short on grub and water. We'll have to come to short allowance, if this thing keeps up!"

The captain had drunk water when he began his meal. He drank a glass of rum now as he thought there might be a scarcity of water. Though perhaps he put the bad spirits down to try to keep his good spirits up.

The barque heeled over as she was brought to the wind, and that so suddenly that half the dishes went crashing off the table, for the protecting sand-bags had not been deemed necessary to keep them on in a smooth sea with a fair wind.

"More bad luck! It comes by fits and keeps on like a grass widow's hysterics!" growled Captain Short. "I wonder if there's a *Jonah* on board!"

And as he said this he darted a half-savage look at poor Wilkins. The latter felt fearfully uneasy. He knew how superstitious some sailors were. He knew, too, that he was alone in the midst of a lawless, almost piratical band.

And he felt too that bad luck or ill-fortune was following him wherever he went.

He rose from the table and said he had no appetite to eat more, while the steward picked up the broken dishes and reset the table for the captain.

"If I thought he brought me bad luck I'm afraid there'll be more shark-bait in the waters before long!" growled the captain as Wilkins went on deck.

The steward heard the words—he repeated them to the cooks, and by nightfall when the barque was creeping on in a light wind with bare steerage-way, and out of her course at that, Wilkins saw many a dark look bent on him, and cold chills ran through his veins, though the thermometer stood 100 degrees in the shade.

All night a head-wind and very little of it. The captain grew uglier and uglier. His oaths almost made the air blue.

The blackbirds in the hold came up but twice the next day. One ration was cut off. In the cabin the steward was told to shorten in on his allowance.

"If it don't blow any fresher by sunset I'll put the whole crew on half-rations!" said the angry captain.

By sunset there was a change. It *did* blow harder. And it blew fair, too. The barque could take her course. But it came so sudden and so sharp—a regular hurricane—that it took three royal and two top-gallant masts with all their sails out of the ship at one gust.

The captain swore and tore about decks in the darkness, and it took half the night to get the wreckage cleared away, while the vessel plunged madly on through the foaming, raging sea, acting like a living thing run mad.

Wilkins, who was no sailor at best, crouched down in a corner in the cabin, and trembled as the great hull creaked and quivered with the strain, and the wind howled overhead and great seas dashed over the half-buried ship.

The captain and officers were too busy keeping the crew at work to save the ship to look at him, or think of him. All the poor blacks could eat or drink was passed into the hold. The poor frightened creatures could not have stood on deck a second.

All night and all the next day she scudded before the gale under close-reefed main and fore-sails. At times she almost went under in the awful sea. And no one prepared food for the cabin—no one belonging there seemed to want it.

The captain was angry at the loss of sails and spars, but while the ship was going her course at almost lightning speed, he counted good as well as evil. She was nearing her destination at the rate of fourteen to sixteen knots an hour.

When he came down on the second morning and found Wilkins in the cabin wan and pale, lying on the cushioned transom aft, he said, not unkindly:

"You'll have to look into the pantry to get a bite o' something cold to eat. The galley is all afloat—the steward has fallen and jammed his leg so he can't walk, and we've got to help ourselves or go hungry."

"I'm not hungry," said Wilkins.

He lied.

"Is this storm going to last forever?" he asked again, while the captain was pouring out a glass of grog for himself.

"I hope it'll blow great guns till we're in sight o' Brazil mountains," said the captain. "All my light sail is gone, and we'd starve in light winds before we struck sight o' land."

He emptied his glass and went on deck.

Wilkins got up and staggered to the same locker, got a drink of raw spirits, and that gave him nerve to look for food.

He found some cold salt beef and hard bread and made a meal. And then he took another glass of spirits.

Then he crawled to his berth and turned in in his clothes and slept. He had not dared to sleep before.

How long he slept he did not know, for it was a slumber of utter exhaustion.

When he woke he could feel that the ship was still driving on, but not so furiously. She did not reel and plunge as she had been doing when he laid down. He got up, found some water in a swinging pitcher where it could not be spilled, took a long and hearty draught—wet his handkerchief and bathed his hot face.

Then he got to the pantry, found some food and ate a little. After this, for the first time in three days, he crept on deck.

The captain, in his oil-skin coat, sea-boots and sou'wester had laid asleep near the wheel, with a coil of rope for his pillow. One sleepy mate stood near the helmsman on watch—the other lay on the weather-side of the deck, sleeping.

Exhausted men dropped around wherever they could stand, or drop down. The barque drove on her course—the wind had lessened, the sea was falling slowly, but not a man was fit to go aloft and loosen such sails as had not been blown away, and which the vessel now could bear.

Wilkins steadied himself and went forward. As he passed the hatchway he could hear the poor blacks howling fearfully below.

Without food or drink they had been deserted in the fearful warfare with the storm.

He did not know all. The barque was leaking, and the poor wretches were knee-deep in water, and it was gaining. Thinking he ought to do it, he went aft and woke the captain.

The latter rose, drowsy, but the better for his rest. He thanked Wilkins when the latter told him the negroes made so much noise below he thought he should be made aware of it.

He went to the hatchway and pounded on it to silence their clamor. Then as they were still an instant he heard them splashing in the water.

"To the pumps!" he shouted. "Carpenters, sound the bell! The ship is half-full of water! Mate—serve out a glass of grog to every man to wake him up!"

The weary men sprung to their feet. They rigged the pumps, and grog and food were served while they worked. Wilkins took hold and, unbidden, worked with the rest.

The negroes were fed once more and fresh water was given. But some were raving who, in their thirst, had drunk of the salt water all too plentiful in the hold.

From time to time the captain sounded the water in the well. When he found that the pumps gained on the leak his face brightened.

"We'll pull through yet," he cried. "Work the pumps cheerily and we'll soon find where the leak is and stop it. Grog every two hours till the ship is free."

The tired men took heart from his cheer and bent to their work. A half-dozen got aloft and shook out the reefs and set the fore-topsail.

Steadier under more sail the barque drove on. She had topmasts and lower masts left, but all her light spars and sails were gone.

When the sun set on this day, the hold was dry, the most of the negroes at least comfortable and the crew, with one watch below asleep, once more hopeful.

The steward, on crutches, hobbled about and aided by one of the crew had supper prepared, hot and nice in the cabin. And the barque still held her course.

The captain had seen how Wilkins worked, when work was needed. He liked it and felt a little ashamed that he had been so rough with him when luck seemed to go so hard with the vessel.

"You're game—you are. It's a pity you aren't in the blackbird trade," he said.

He meant this as a compliment.

"It requires more nerve than I've got," said his passenger, pitching into some bologna sausage ravenously and washing it down with hot tea, the first he had seen since he came on board.

"Nerve is good in its place and it is needed in this trade!" said Short. "A man gets into a tight place more often here than anywhere else. We often get bad gangs of blacks to manage, fellows from the mountain tribes that are full of fight and ugly as Satan—our own crew are half of them outcasts and desperadoes, and besides all this, fleets of cruisers scour the seas to pick us up, caring not how we poor cusses suffer as long as they make prize-money. It is a horrid life, a risky life, but when it pays, it pays big. I'm going to make one more voyage and quit. I did say I would make *this* my last. But there's a black-eyed señorita waiting for me in Rio Janeiro whose father has five hundred thousand *pesos* laid up for as a dowry."

"When I can show as much more on my side, he consents to our marriage. And it will take one more voyage for me to even up on that amount!"

After supper Wilkins went on deck for a smoke. The night was clear, the first time the stars had been seen since they left. The vessel, under all the sail she could set now, made fair headway. Had she been able to set more sail she would have done better.

But Captain Short did not grumble. He had weathered a bad gale and come off better than he expected, a great deal. And "*Jonah*" hadn't turned out as useless or dangerous as he thought he would.

Wilkins had redeemed himself, and at a most opportune moment. He began to hope his "luck" had changed.

It is an old adage that "you mustn't hallo before you get out of the woods!" I don't know where it originated, but I understand it to mean that nothing is certainly yours until it is acquired and held.

The night passed pleasantly—watches were relieved as usual and the fair wind held in the same quarter.

The sun had hardly risen next morning, however, when the watch on duty had swabbed off the decks and the first batch of negroes been fed, when the lookout just sent aloft yelled out:

"Sail ho!"

Short was out of his berth and on deck in less than a minute, spy-glass in hand. And he saw the sail at the instant the lookout answered the "whereaway" of the mate.

Wilkins had not turned out. In truth he was sleeping and had not heard the alarm.

From the deck, even without his glass, the captain saw, dead to windward and standing down toward him, a ship with tall masts, square yards, and a crowd of snow-white canvas.

* This was before the days of telegraphy.

Coming before the wind, her colors could not be seen, but the black muzzles of a heavy battery of guns protruded from either side, and he knew it was a man-of-war, and she was fast overhauling him.

"Jonah is with us yet!" he groaned. "I'd give every nigger aboard if I had my light sails and spars on the craft now! If I can't fool that craft we're gone. Half of you men go below out o' sight. Clear a boat ready to lower—I must board him with my papers, if I can, and keep busy eyes away from here!"

The man-of-war, with all sail spread, came on grandly, but there was no eye in all that crew to appreciate her beauty. Prayers were not often said on the slaver's deck, but if curses could have sunk the war-ship she would have gone under in ten seconds.

Wakened by the steward, whose eyes flashed wickedly as he said another streak of luck had struck the barque, Wilkins dressed and went on deck.

Short saw him and his face darkened. Going close, he said in a low tone:

"An accursed man-o'-war is closing up on us. I shall try to fool her with my clearance and health papers and a false manifest. If she should send a boat on board here and you try word or look, give a *hint* that endangers us—*this*," he half-drew a murderous dagger from inside his vest—"this will go through and through your heart in less than a second!"

"I'll go below at once and keep out of sight!" said Wilkins, trembling with real fear.

"It's the best thing you can do. I believe you are a *Jonah*, anyway!"

Wilkins went into the cabin. From the stern windows he could watch the pursuing ship just as well as if he had been on deck. And he was alone. If it was not so perilous—for he would be murdered on the spot if detected—he thought he would try in some way to signal the ship and show at least that he was in distress and needed help.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE ZEPHYR AND THE QUEEN OF THE SEA.

REACHING Havana in just four days and a half from New York—actual fast steamer time, now—Captain Barnacle, with hold and decks full of choice flour, was hailed with delight by the Cuban authorities and the people. Never before in the history of the Gem of the Antilles had there been such a dearth of bread stuff there.

The first thing he did on entering the harbor was to send a dozen barrels of flour and a basket of choice wine to the palace of the captain-general and to make the captain of the port a handsome present. And he reaped the benefit when he was informed all port charges would be remitted on his vessel, she having arrived at a time of such urgent need.

The great house of Juan Cabanza & Co. purchased his cargo instantly at even better rates than he expected, and they had immediate sale at retail for their purchase at a fair advance.

And through the same great firm he soon had a return cargo engaged, and as soon as the flour was out he *purchased*, instead of taking freight, with the money he had made on the flour. For he was determined to show Mortimor Monk on this trip that he was not merely a good navigator and a skillful seaman, but had mercantile capacity as well.

After he had bought and got on board a fair cargo of coffees, sugars and a small quantity of the choicest fruit, he arranged through a friend of his consignees for an invoice of the choicest brand of cigars and the highest priced ever exported from the island. His friend the captain of the port, whose heart had been won by the first present, remained a second, and those cigars were spirited on board free of export duty, and of course unregistered on the manifest.

The bulk was not great, nor the weight large, but the value was very great, and once landed without revenue charge the profits on their sale would be nearly five times the actual cost.

When Barnacle was ready for sea, he was detained one day by an invitation to dine at the palace, an honor so seldom tendered to a foreigner, especially a merchant captain, it could not well be declined.

At the close of the banquet, the Spanish nobleman who acted as captain-general, pressed a diamond ring of great value on the hand of his guest, and told him whenever he came to Havana a visit from him would be expected at the palace.

Barnacle could just wear the brilliant on the little finger of his left hand, and while he valued it highly, in his heart he resolved it would look better on the delicate hand of Cybele Monk, and he vowed if she would accept it, there it should shine.

When Barnacle was ready to sail, flour began to pour in, cargo after cargo, until the price declined more than half in one day, and he saw it would soon glut the market.

By some mishap, perhaps the vessel it was sent by had not arrived, Barnacle did not get the letter sent by Mortimor Monk for his instruction and to put him on his guard against the two cutters on special lookout for him.

So he went to sea, not warned, yet surely not

careless of strangers always to be met by men of his class.

He had a fair wind and getting over into the full strength of the Gulf Stream as soon as he could, he headed homeward, anxious to astonish his owners and the commercial world with the short time taken for so long a voyage, both out and back.

But he had light winds on his return and it was not until he had been seven days out that he sighted Barnegat light, as he headed up the coast, well inshore to look out for a signal at a certain point known only to him and his owners.

It was early in the morning—in fact the light had been seen before day dawned, and a breeze from the eastward which looked as if it would freshen when the sun rose, tossed the foam high on the rolling waves through which the Sea Queen sped.

He took an early breakfast with his first mate and at table they canvassed the chances of getting in without being overhauled by the revenue sharks—and talked of the surprise Mr. Monk would experience when he learned what a profitable voyage had been made in so short a time.

While lingering over his second cup of strong coffee, Captain Barnacle was called on deck by the second mate, who said:

"There is a small white schooner inshore of us, sir, with a flag lettered Z at her foremast-head, and she is heading out for us, with signals flying at her mainmast-head. A lady, too, is on deck, who waves a handkerchief!"

"A thousand to one it is Miss Cybele in her yacht the Zephyr. There is mischief afloat somewhere and she is sent to warn me!" cried Barnacle, jumping at a correct conclusion in a second.

And shortening sail, he luffed in, keeping a course which would soon bring the two vessels side by side.

In less than ten minutes, the Zephyr was lashed to the weather side of the Queen of the Sea and Cybele sprang on the deck of the large schooner.

"Captain—we have not a moment for talk or compliments!" she cried. "If you have any contraband goods on board, stow them in my yacht instantly. I will see they get safely in!"

"I have twenty thousand dollars' worth of cigars!" he said. "And your little yacht will hold them easily. But why this haste and why should you run the risk you do?"

"Because two revenue cutters are looking for you between here and Sandy Hook, and their orders are to catch you foul if possible. I passed one not three hours ago—I had no lights and was unseen!"

Barnacle instantly ordered the goods transferred. It was just done—the last box in, when Barnard, who had been aloft on the lookout, reported a cutter in sight coming down from the northeast under full sail—six or seven miles off.

"Just in time, bravest and fairest on earth! Wear this for my sake!" cried Barnacle, as he pressed the Cuban diamond on the finger of Cybele.

The next instant the Zephyr was off, heading inshore.

CHAPTER XXXXI.

THE ZEPHYR—AN ANGEL'S WARNING.

STANDING in-shore, and at the same time heading up the coast, the little Zephyr, very fast for her size, was miles away from the "Queen," but in full sight of her when the revenue-cutter, a large ten-gun schooner, bore down and hove about alongside of her. Of course Cybele felt no alarm for the vessel or her brave young captain now, for she knew he had not a pound of cargo which was liable to seizure since all he had now on board was recorded on his papers for due entrance at the Custom-house when he went in. And she, under easy sail, stood along in shallow water, intending to watch the cutter and slip into port after they had followed Barnacle in, as she knew they would do.

"Noble little woman that she is!" said Barnacle, addressing his first mate Barnard, when he glanced at the pretty yacht safely off. "How few in her station, rich, young and fair, would dare with only two sailors and a maid, to take such a voyage as this. And to run such a risk!"

"With the heart-disease on her, too!" said Barnard, gravely.

"The heart-disease? What do you mean? Have you ever heard she was thus afflicted?" asked Barnard, really alarmed.

"My eyes and ears diagnosed the case!" said Barnard, serious as a deacon on his first prayer for the meeting. "I saw her bodice rise and fall like the fluttering wings of a dying dove, when you put that ring on her finger. And I heard her heart beat a tattoo like a kettle-drum as she looked into your eyes with her glorious orbs. It is a decided case of heart-disease, and you are the only physician who can do her any good!"

"You—but I'll not call you a harsh name! But why in thunder did you scare me so? I thought you were in earnest at first!"

"So I am—but hadn't we better have some

fun with that cutter? We can go two feet to her one. Suppose we head out to sea and act as if we wanted to elude her. It will distract all attention from that pretty boat inside there."

"Right. Make all sail and steer a half a dozen points more off-shore."

The cutter, with her perpendicular striped flag flying, was crowding all sail and heading straight for the "Queen," not over two miles off, when the latter suddenly altered her course and headed eastward.

This brought her with her beam to the bows of the cutter, and the latter at once was seen to change her course also, so as to intercept the schooner.

Barnacle laughed.

"He has taken the bait!" he cried. "He thinks I'm in the *contraband*, sure, and am trying to steer clear of him."

The cutter now got up a topmast and lower studding-sail, the last extra canvas she could spread. In a little while her commander must have seen that the Queen was gaining, for he fired a gun to windward, as a signal he wished to speak her.

Barnacle only had his ensign run up at his gaff as an answer. He still held his course about five points off-shore.

The commander of the cutter evidently enraged at the refusal of the Queen to heave to at his signal, now fired a round-shot from his single pivot-gun, evidently aiming ahead of the merchantman.

The shot fell short, but did strike the water nearly abeam of the Queen, and ricocheting once or twice sunk two or three hundred yards from the vessel.

Again and again the cutter fired, but Barnacle paid no attention to her, and sailed away from her as if she was standing still.

Barnacle could fancy the anger and mortification felt by the officers on the cutter, but it was all fun for him and his gallant little crew, for they well knew they were safe from everything but impotent and useless wrath.

An hour or a little more the Queen was headed seaward, and by that time the cutter was so far off on his weather-quarter, that he hauled sharp on a wind and headed up nearly on his old course.

Instantly the cutter took in her studding-sails and braced up her yards and flattened in sheets to follow him, for this threw her almost astern.

The wind had freshened to a good working breeze, and both vessels made fine headway, though the "Queen" led the van and gained all the time.

The cutter fired a gun every little while, and doing this while out of range, satisfied Barnacle she was firing to signal another cutter further up the coast.

Swiftly now he was approaching his port, the tall lights of the Highlands came in view, and though the first cutter fell astern slowly, Barnacle was certain he would soon see another—his old antagonist, the Washington, but not with a Fontelroy in charge.

Sure enough, when he had passed Long Branch and was heading for the deep-water channel off Sandy Hook, the cutter he looked for was seen in mid-channel, her colors flying and guns pointing from the ports, ready for use, waiting for him.

Barnacle knew now, as he was leaving the high sea and going into port, he *must* respect an order to heave to or be fired into, and having had his amusement with the first cutter he was ready to receive the attentions of the next quietly.

He could see astern, still crowding all sail, that the first cutter only had eyes for him, so he felt no alarm for the little Zephyr far down the coast.

Heading right in on the other tack, for the wind veered as he approached the Hook, he steered mid-channel, and his course took him within hailing distance of the Washington.

He smiled when he saw officers and men standing at quarters, tompons all out of the guns, as if they expected armed resistance.

When hailed and ordered to heave to and wait for a boat to board him, he answered, "Ay, ay," quietly, and brailing up his foresail, rounded to, with the foretopsail aback and jib-sheet hauled to windward.

A lieutenant and two customs inspectors came on board, and a sight at the schooner's papers was demanded.

They were exhibited without any hesitation.

"From a Southern port—you will have to stop at Quarantine!" said the lieutenant.

"Of course—any fool would know that!" said the young captain, with a smile.

"I hope, sir, you do not insinuate that I am a fool!" said the officer, with an angry gesture.

"I make no insinuations!" said Barnacle, with a smile. "Have you any further cause to delay me? The tide is setting out and we lose ground here in the channel!"

"These inspectors will remain on board until your cargo is all broke out and landed," said the officer. "And I am instructed to warn you that any rudeness to them, or obstacles thrown in their way as they do their duty, will cause your immediate seizure."

"Pray, sir—from whom do these instructions

emanate?" asked Barnacle, still calm and placid.

"From the Collector of the Port of New York, sir!"

"Indeed! A second-class politician whose ward influence arose from the atmospheric power of a corner grocery!"

"Captain—I shall report your disrespectful language!"

"Do. And add to it that I hold such influence and such power as beneath contempt, and not to be feared. I respect the laws of my country and obey them; but I blush to think how they are perverted and abused by things who strut about under an official seal for a little while and then sink back into the slums from which they came!"

The officer's face reddened with anger.

"You are the man that shot Lieutenant Fontelroy, are you not?"

"I am, sir. Do you wish to take a lesson in target practice?"

"No, sir—not from you. I never lower my dignity by meeting persons beneath my rank!"

And with this parting shot, which he deemed heavy, the lieutenant turned on his heel and went toward his boat.

Before entering it, he said:

"The schooner can go on into port, but I shall keep within hail in the cutter, and if the inspectors need my presence, they have but to make signal, and I will at once come on board with an armed force!"

And swelling with importance, as grand as a turkey-gobbler in its spring feathers, he stepped into his boat and went back to the cutter.

Both vessels were now filled away. The other cutter now coming up fast astern followed them in.

At Quarantine Barnacle, already favorably known to the inspecting surgeon as a dispenser of "Golden Drops," was passed without trouble, and he supposed he would be allowed to run in to his regular pier at once when he reached the city.

But in this he was mistaken. He was ordered to anchor off the Battery, and there his cargo underwent a close inspection—all the inspectors could do till the cargo was all out and landed.

To their disappointment and disgust nothing could be found to pay for all this trouble, and the officers of both cutters anchored close at hand, had no call for their services.

The captain or the first cutter was too wise, for he was an old hand, to make a fuss about the schooner keeping on when he fired on her at sea, so Barnacle, just as night set in, was allowed to go up to his pier. But the inspectors did not leave him yet. And they would not until the last pound of his cargo was on shore and they had searched the run and every part of the vessel for secret lockers.

The collector was bound to annoy Barnacle as much as possible.

CHAPTER XL.

THE SIREN'S SONG—DANGER TO THE SIREN.

WEARIED with what was literally imprisonment, close hiding so long in the old Rookery, Eliza McCord went out at nightfall to get fresh air and watch the vessels on the moonlit sea.

Dressed in male costume—she wore a suit which had belonged to Reddy—she moved about with freedom at that hour, for she had no fear of being seen, with the bushy background to obscure her form from any of the passing vessels.

She had left her father moping over his grog in the Rookery, for the old man had been in low spirits over the loss of his men and the difficulty before them in getting away with their hidden plunder.

Out to the very end of the old pier the disguised girl crept and there laid down on the planks, and taking off the slouch hat which covered her short hair she enjoyed the cool breeze that came in off the distant waves of the ocean.

A large ship under all sail was standing out to sea on the flood tide, and as she thought it might be bound to England, how she wished she and her father were on board with the treasure on their way to a place of safety.

Dreamily for hours she lay there and thought and longed and watched.

Suddenly she started, and but for fear of discovery would have sprung to her feet.

A voice she had often heard—one she could never forget, came swelling over the water in a song she had heard many a time—a song descriptive of love and chivalry in the olden times.

The voice was that of Cybele Monk, and in a few minutes the singer, seated at the tiller of her pretty yacht, keeping close inshore out of the strong tide, passed the pier so close that if Lize had been erect she could have jumped on board.

Down—down, close as she could press on the timbers, motionless and scarcely breathing, Lize lay till the boat had passed and swept on up the bay. If she had been seen—recognized, of what avail would be their present hiding-place? the girl thought.

When the boat was gone from sight, when the voice of the singer died away, Lize rose and rushed back to the Rookery.

Her father sat in the back room, a half-

emptied glass before him, asleep. He had not shaved, or paid any attention to his hair or dress, since he had been there, and he looked older, more haggard, more wretched than she had ever seen him look before.

"Father! Father!" she cried, touching him on the shoulder.

"What—what! Is any one around?" he cried, springing to his feet and drawing a pistol.

He went armed now, night and day. And so did Lize.

"No one now, father, but ten minutes ago I was almost within my hand's reach of Cybele Monk!"

"Cybele Monk? Are the officers on our track? I'll die before I yield!"

"Hush! Don't get excited till you have cause for it. No one is after us. We are as safe now as we were yesterday, or the day before!"

"Where—where then did you see that girl?"

"In her pretty yacht, the Zephyr. She passed up the bay, so close to the pier where I was lying, I could have jumped on board. She was singing a song I have heard her sing a hundred times, and I saw her face in the moonlight as plain as I now see yours. Only I was lying in the shadow of the string-piece on the pier, she would have seen me, if she had looked that way!"

"Who was with her?"

"A maid, and an old sailor on deck forward, was all I saw!"

"Oh, why was I not there with you?"

"What would you have done, father?"

"This!" he answered, striking his hand so fiercely on the table the bottle and glasses jumped. "I would have sprung on board, captured the craft, held the girl to ransom and in the yacht sought refuge in Southern seas—gone to Bermuda with our treasure. I have seen the boat—she is at least four or five tons, and maybe more. Plenty large enough for so short a voyage as that!"

"Father, would you dare do such a bold and desperate thing?"

"Dare, girl? I am getting so I'll dare almost anything rather than to stay here like a hunted wolf with the dogs outside of its den!"

Lize seemed wrapped in thought for a few moments.

"Father," she said, at last, "I know where the yacht lays, when not in use by Miss Cybele. On any dark night you and I can go to the spot in our boat and capture her."

"That isn't all I want!" he said, fiercely. "I want the boat with her on board! She is worth a million of dollars if held to RANSOM! And her father would give it to get his child back. And with her in our power we could ask and get immunity from all crime—freedom to go unhunted, without molestation whither we choose!"

Again Lize paused to think. At last she spoke:

"The plan is good, if it only can be accomplished."

"It must be. I have almost gone mad studying how we were to get away from this hateful old Rookery. Now I see a way. And a chance to make the fortune we missed on that woeful unlucky night. Plan it, girl—you are bright as new gold, while I am old and rusty—plan it, girl, to get her in that yacht anywhere clear of the wharves of the city, and she is ours!"

"I'll think, father, I'll think. She is often out sailing—sometimes every day for a week in fair weather. I have been with her, you know. The yacht is fast, and rides a sea like a duck."

"Yes, yes! She is just what we want. We must have her!"

"And we will! I have a plan—I have a plan!"

"What is it?"

"Wait till I perfect it in my mind, father. I will sleep on it—then think again, and when it is all right in my mind, you shall know!"

"All right. But don't wait too long. I'm getting so sick of this life here, I would face any peril to get out of it."

"I'll make a good cup of tea, father, and then with some of that cold rabbit-pie, we'll sup and go to bed."

"All right, girl. I snared another rabbit to-night. I went and got it while you were away."

Lize started a small fire in the old stone fireplace, put on a kettle of water to boil, made tea and they supped.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE ACME OF HOPE—THE DEPTHS OF DESPAIR.

THE agony of suspense with which Ebenezer Wilkins watched the man-of-war astern of the slaver, as he gazed through the cabin window, could never be described in mere words.

If she was American or English, he knew most likely the slaver would be searched, and of course seized. But if French or Spanish the commander would be easily satisfied.

If Portuguese, the slaver, if known to be such, would not be molested, for that Government then openly encouraged the trade. Almost all the slave stations on the Coast of Guinea were owned by Portuguese traders.

Steadily, nearer and nearer and nearer came

the vessel, and now Wilkins could see the dark, weather-bronzed faces of seamen looking over the bows of the approaching ship. They were in the shadow of the overhanging sails, and he could not see them plainly enough to judge what their nationality might be from their looks.

The agony of suspense only increased as she drew nearer and nearer, her head booms just reaching the lee-quarter of the slaver—her bows scarce the toss of a biscuit off to leeward.

So close, that as she drew on and got abeam, Wilkins could not look up from the low cabin window to her gaff to see what flag flew there.

He heard a gruff voice hailing. It spoke in a strange tongue. He could not understand the language spoken, but Captain Short evidently did, for he heard him reply in the same tongue with apparent fluency.

One thing was sure—it was not the English language, and the man-of-war was neither American or British.

In agony he went into his state-room, shut the door and wept.

He heard Short give orders to back the main-topsail and put the helm a-lee. He knew by that the ships had hove to. Then he heard the boat lowered and rowed away.

It was gone some time, and then to his ears, for he dared not go on deck, it appeared as if other boats came and went from the barque, and he heard sounds as if weighty articles had been brought and cast down on the deck overhead.

This went on for a little while, then all was quiet, and soon after he heard Short give orders to fill away. He felt the motion of the vessel as she once more steered her course, while a good deal of noise on deck spoke of work going on up there.

What it meant he could not tell, and with the fearful threat of Short yet ringing in his ears, he did not like to go and see.

After a while Short came down into the cabin. He seemed to be in a jolly good-humor, for he was humming an old sea song.

He went to the cupboard for a glass of his favorite beverage, and then looked around for Wilkins.

Not seeing him, he knocked on his state-room door.

"Are you in there?" he asked.

"Yes, sir!" said Wilkins. "I was afraid I might be in your way, so I stowed away here where no one would see me."

"Oh, it's all right now. Come out. Are you anything of a carpenter?"

"No, sir—not that I know of; but I'm always willing to try to do what I can. What is it you want?"

"Well, I want to fit our new spars as fast as I can, and get 'em up with the sails on. The Brazilian corvette Braganza let me have new topgallant and royal masts and yards and sails to fit, so we are fixed now for any wind. Our luck has turned, and you aren't a *Jonah* after all!"

"I'm glad to hear it, sir," said Wilkins, relieved to think his personal danger had passed, but sad at the thought that he was yet far from getting a passage home.

He went on deck with Captain Short where every one was busy fitting the heels of the new masts and getting the sails fast to the yards, reeving rigging, halliards, braces and so on, and he turned to and lent a hand wherever he saw a chance to do anything.

By this he hoped to remove if he could the ill-will he had seen more than once exhibited by officers and men on board.

The Brazilian man-of-war had made sail as soon as she left the supplies and was already well off on her course to Rio Janeiro, whither she was bound.

The men worked steady and well under direction of the one carpenter on board, and before the noon call for grog and dinner was heard the three topgallant masts were aloft and fidded and the shrouds and stays fitted over the mast-heads.

After dinner the royal masts were sent aloft, and quickly after topgallant and royal yards were sent up and crossed.

Then sail was made, and before sunset the bark was a cloud of sail from the trucks down to her deck and going through the water lively even with a light breeze.

And Ebenezer Short was himself again.

He fed his negroes three times a day on full allowance and cursed the steward for economy in the cabin.

He said he wanted but a week more of fair wind with a whole sail breeze to carry him into Bahia fluking and his darkies would be in trim for the highest price a planter could offer. All his past troubles seemed forgotten and he was as friendly to Wilkins as if he had been an old chum instead of an undesired passenger.

Four days and nights went by and not a brace, sheet or halliard had to be touched. So fair and steady was the wind. The crew sung and danced about the deck, full of joy at arriving so near the end of their voyage.

Visions of pay and plenty of chances to spend their money in dissipation on shore were before them and they were happy.

The fifth morning after he got his new spars

Short began to look for land. It was not sighted until afternoon and then it was the crest of an interior mountain range which could be made out.

"A part of the Sierra Espinhacco! We are away to leeward of our port—the current is setting south," said Short, when the land showed up more plainly as they stood inshore.

So he had to brace up and haul to the northward almost on a wind. But, knowing where he was, the captain felt little annoyance, though he said it was a bad land-fall for him to make.

He looked rather glum when the sun went down in a bank of black clouds beyond the mountain peaks. But the wind yet held so he could lay his course up the coast, and he stood on.

A broad ring around the moon, and off eastward a mass of flaky, long-winged clouds, called "Mares'-tails" by sailors, next attracted his notice, after he came on deck from a late supper.

"We're goin' to have a blow—a snorter too!" he muttered. "But it may hold off till we get in. Our luck is too good just now to be spoiled again!"

The wind became variable as the night advanced—heavy flaws off the land forced the furling of the royals and topgallant sails. But the barque did very well, for all that. When day dawned Short, who had kept on deck all night in his anxiety, sighted the bluffs at the southern point of All Saints' Bay, the mouth of the Paramassa, and his destined port.

"We'll make it yet!" he said in glee, as he ordered up a cup of coffee from the galley and drank it, instead of his usual tumbler of grog.

His chief mate, an old, grizzle-headed sailor who boasted that he had spent forty-five out of his fifty-five years of life on the ocean, looked off eastward and said:

"Cap, don't crow too loud! Our hen hasn't laid her last egg yet. We're eight or ten leagues from port, and we'll be under double-reefs inside an hour! D'ye see? Our sails are flapping! The land breeze has left us. Look how the sea begins to heave and roll out there. And it's so clear you could see a sail twenty mile if there was one in the offing! We'll see a cloud or two in an hour—and then, you know what's comin'! Look out for all we can stomach!"

"You're right. Get down our light spars and stow 'em soon as you can! See everything lashed fast fore and aft. We'll reef down then and hold the old tub to it till she goes in or bursts!"

And when Short said this he went below, and freshened his nip from his favorite bottle.

He knew the judgment of his chief mate too well to believe he could slide into port, though so near, without a struggle with the elements.

Wilkins had been told how near they were to port and his heart had begun to beat with the hope of finding some homeward-bound American there when he saw the light spars sent down and rigged in and secured.

Next came double reefs in the topsails, and that while the vessel rolled and pitched in a dead calm—not a breath of wind to steady her, but huge, rolling waves coming in from the eastward.

"What does it mean?" he asked of the mate, who stood aft by the rail having a life-line rope.

"Ask the storm-fiend in his war-chariot!" said the mate, pointing to a mass of black clouds tinged with streaks of fiery red, rising swift over the darkening ocean to the east.

Wilkins shuddered, for he felt that his old luck was on him. A chill went like ice to his heart. And he went below to get away from dark looks bent upon his pallid face.

He did not see that a wall of foam higher than the main yard-arm came rolling in on the beam, nor hear the shrill burst, as of a thousand charging trumpets, shake the air, while the captain shouted:

"Let go all! Clew down fore and aft!"

But he did feel the terrible shock when the barque, struck by wind and sea right abeam, rolled over on her side, helpless in the awful storm.

Pitched headlong against a bulkhead, stunned almost into unconsciousness, his ears ringing with the deafening turmoil about him, he could only clutch at something to hold onto and pray for Heaven's mercy in that awful hour.

He heard the dash of water pouring into the cabin—he heard the crash of spars above, cut or breaking away, he felt the vessel going over more and more, and he groaned out:

"We are lost! WE ARE LOST!"

CHAPTER XLII.

MOST FIENDISH PLOT OF ALL.

WHEN Eliza McCord came down from her bedroom in the old Rookery next morning after she had told her father she had "formed a plan and would sleep over it," the old man at a first glance did not know her, but with an angry look and his hand on his pistol, cried out:

"Who in thunder are you, sir, and what do you want here?"

"Lize laughed, and in her natural tone said:

"I'll do, father! When I am so disguised that even your love-lighted eyes do not recognize me, I am safe from those who are comparative strangers, even if I meet any of them,

which I shall not do, if I can avoid it. I am going to town to-day!"

"Not up to the city?"

"Yes, father, with a letter which I have written, up to the city. It must be mailed there!"

"Why not at the upper end of this island? There are post-offices there."

"Because those I have written to, or the one I mean, must not dream we are on this island. No clew of that kind must be thrown out, or the police would overrun it in a day! The letter must go into the main office in the city and I must put it there. I will trust no one else!"

"Who is the letter written to?"

"To Cybele Monk, for her eye only! After I have got a hasty breakfast for you—I want but a cup of coffee now—I will read it to you!"

"Never mind breakfast for me—I will get some when I feel like it, by and by. Put on your coffee-pot, and then read the letter to me!"

She obeyed. The letter read thus:

"MISS CYBELE MONK:—One whose heart is almost broken over the thought of how ungratefully I repaid you and your father for your great kindness, has now a chance to do something to serve you and show you I am not altogether wicked. My father and myself have arranged to get away to England, and are so well disguised and hidden, all the police in the world will not find or stop us. But he is anxious to put into your hands sworn proof that a duel, fair and honorable, and not a murder, resulted in the death of Lord Eggleston, and that your noble father, now the rightful Lord Strathmere and owner of the grandest estate in England, is an innocent and wronged man. He picked up on the ground, that morning, the original challenge written by Lord Eggleston. And when he gets to England, my father, who was a gamekeeper on the Strathmere estate, will resume his real name and stand ready to appear as a witness for your noble father. If you will meet me alone in your yacht, I, too, will be alone in a boat, at midnight, on the East River, at its mouth, midway between Castle Garden and Governor's Island, on the second night after the day when you receive this note. Then you will receive all I have promised. Trust me and you will yet stand beside the fairest ladies in England, their peer! From the repentant girl you knew as

"ELIZA MCCORD."

"P. S. Let me warn you, friends will watch to see that you embark in your yacht with only your maid and one man to manage it, and if you take more or show an intention to arrest me, I shall not appear and we will go to England without taking any further steps to serve you. As you love your father, have a care. E. McC."

"Lize! You're a queen to plan. The girl will come on that—I am sure she will," said the old captain.

"And," he continued, while she was pouring out the coffee, "the time you set gives us plenty of room for our work. We can dig up the treasure to-night and have it ready to stow in the boat, we can have arms and provisions ready—nothing wanting to put right to sea when we get possession of the yacht and girl. We can overpower the man—bind and gag them all, and be far away before day dawns upon our wake. The plan is good—it cannot fail."

"Well, father, be cheerful. I must be off. I shall foot it to the upper end of the island, take a fast skiff, get to the city, do my work before night and get back here before you go to bed."

"That last you will, for I shall take no rest till I see you back and hear your story."

"Lize having drunk her coffee, took a look in a large old-fashioned mirror on the wall, to see if there was any fault in her disguise.

It was that of a young man-o'-war sailor, with loose trowsers, frock or shirt of blue dungaree—pilot cloth pea-jacket and tarpaulin hat. Hands, arms, face and neck were stained a nut-brown as if wind and sun had left the marks of more than one hard voyage there.

"You'll do—no one would ever dream you was a girl," said her father.

"All right—good-by—look for me by nine or ten to-night at latest."

She was off, assuming the rolling gait of the sailor, and moving rapidly up the shore to the northward.

About noon that day, when Cybele Monk was alone in her cosy chamber, looking at the flashing diamond placed by chance on the betrothal finger, by Captain Barnacle, a servant came to her and said a child, a young and pretty girl, had a note at the door, directed to her, which the child would give into no other hands.

Cybele at once went down, told the child who she was, and received the note, for the child seemed to have had a description of her, she gave up the note so readily. Then, in a second, without waiting to be questioned, she ran off and was out of sight in a second. Most likely she had been well paid to act precisely as she did.

Cybele hurried to her room, opened the note and with eyes of wonder read the note again and again.

"What shall I do?" she asked herself.

Her first thought was to take it to her cousin, Alva De Lorme, and to her father.

But a second thought told her that would destroy every chance of getting the promised proof. If they allowed her to go at all to meet her former maid, they would not let her go

alone. And most likely they would wish to plan for an arrest.

"I will keep my own secret," she said. "I will trust that misguided girl. I have ever believed she was forced by the gang who were killed to come to this house to find out what was in it. She had many good traits, if she was their tool or decoy. I will trust her. It is so near the city, no one would dare use violence, when a single shriek would call help. I can take one man and my maid. I will keep the secret and meet the girl."

She laid the note aside and pondered over it a good while.

"How happy my father will be," she said to herself, "when I place those proofs in his hands. It will give him new life. Yes—I will go—but to prepare, if treachery is intended, this note and my time of starting and course shall be left where they can be found if I do not return before I am missed. For I shall pretend to retire early and leave the house with my maid unseen!"

Thus far the plan of bold Eliza McCord worked well. She had not on after-thought even trusted her letter through the post-office—but hired an intelligent little girl to take what she supposed was a love-letter from a young sailor to his sweetheart.

The plan was well laid and equally well carried out.

Well satisfied that Cybele got the note, for the child messenger described her when she came back to get a second dollar, Eliza made her way back to Staten Island, as she came, and as soon as she could. That was not a day of rapid transit and fast ferry-boats, and she had a whole day's journey in her task.

But at nine o'clock she was back in the old Rookery with her father, eating stewed rabbit and drinking hot tea.

And after midnight the two dug up their treasure-chests and concealed them in the house ready for transportation to their boat under the pier when ready to start on their next desperate venture.

The time had been so calculated that the moon would not have risen. And also that a change of tide would give them an advantage in getting swiftly away when their dark work was done.

Until noon of the next day Tom McCord and his daughter slept after the work of the day and night before. They needed rest and took it.

Then they rose and made a hearty meal. No thought of the cruel work impaired their appetites. The separation of that fair girl from a father who literally worshiped her was nothing if their mercenary ends were gained.

But Eliza was not through planning yet. She wrote another note and showed it to her father, who approved of it.

"TO MORTIMOR MONK, alias THE LORD OF STRATHMERE:—

"When you find this note on the boat which we leave as a last legacy to the brilliant police of New York, your daughter will be on her way to England. When you are ready to pay one million of dollars as her ransom, advertise the fact in the London Times, and you will hear from Tom McCord and his daughter."

All ready, when night set in, the old barge was drawn from under the pier, loaded with treasures, arms and provisions, sail made and slowly, working over under the Long Island shore to pass unnoticed, she proceeded toward the place of intended meeting.

At eleven she lay waiting quietly in the Buttermilk Channel, not five minutes now from the spot where the white-hulled yacht would come if Cybele kept faith.

CHAPTER XLIII.

JONAH OUT OF THE JAWS OF DEATH.

WHEN Wilkins felt that the barque was on her beam-ends—heard the sea rushing into the cabin by the companionway, from the deck, he felt sure she was a wreck and that he had no chance for life.

He heard the negroes yelling in the hold from which they could not escape, and he prayed that his suffering might soon be over.

Everything was adrift in the cabin, table, stools and mats floating around—he was more than half-immersed in water, and was dashed to and fro with every roll of the ship.

It was dark as midnight then, and he could see no way to get out of the cabin if it would better his condition.

When the water was up to his shoulders as he stood erect, clinging to the timbers that had been overhead, but now were in front of him, he thought a few minutes more would end it all! He prayed as he never had prayed before, not for life, but for mercy in the life to come. All his past life, like a panorama, came before him, the good and the bad, and the last seemed predominant.

But time rolled on, the ship plunged and pitched, but the water rose no higher—he had room to breathe, that was all. He could hear shouts, he thought, now and then, and knew thus that others lived besides himself. A prisoner in that wretched place—how long could he endure life as it was?

Weakening, he would have perished but for

feeling the open cupboard at his feet, and he got a bottle of spirits by reaching down where it lay.

This he uncorked, and he drank freely of the raw, fiery stuff. It warmed his chilled veins, it gave him temporary strength.

Hours had gone by with no means to count them, and the water-logged hulk was still afloat—he alive and that was all.

He drank more of the fiery rum, and then, whether it was a real noise or a precursor of death, he did not know, but he thought an awful roaring sound reached his ears.

And an instant later, with a crash that threw him headlong to the after part of the cabin, the hull struck some hard object, and he heard the crash of timbers and planks giving way in the shock.

Suddenly, and for the first time since the ship went over, he saw light. The whole stern-frame opened and went out, and he sprang for the opening.

In a second, clinging to a part of the floating cabin, he was out on a rolling mass of foam, in among great breakers, and drifting he knew not where. He could hear only the awful roar of the huge surges, see pieces of wreck here and there, and see on them some human beings clinging for life like himself.

One piece, a broken mast drove by close to him. On it a man was lashed, and he saw this man shake his clinched hand in fury and heard him shriek out:

"Jonah! JONAH!"

It was Short, the captain. The mast rolled on—it went under a great surge, struck a rock, rose broken in two and the man was gone.

Who or what could live in such a wild turmoil of raging water?

Wilkins had put the half-emptied bottle inside his vest to save it if he could, and now he drank all he could swallow. He must have warmth and strength or he could not cling to his frail support. The bottle broke in his hand as he held it, for a piece of wreck struck it even at his mouth. But he had taken a part, he was stronger for the time. He could see land—high black rocks before him, but the sea was white with foam all the way between him and the shore.

He saw some black objects near him. They rolled over and over in the white surges. They were close to him. He shuddered and almost felt like shrieking out and sinking under the sea. The surf was spotted with dead negroes, rolling and tossing all around him. If any lived and crawled on the little raft hardly keeping him afloat, what would he do?

He had seen but one white man—that was Short. Nothing of the barque but planks and spars.

On—he drove with the blacks tossing and rolling, their hideous faces distorted with death-agonies, all about him. He seemed to near the land as if a current bore him in. Yet it grew indistinct as he drove on. His brain seemed to whirl. "At last—at last"—he moaned, as he grew weaker and more weak—"I am dying!"

He remembered no more of what happened.

When he again knew that he was yet alive, he was in a berth—in such a berth as he knew belonged to a ship, for he saw timbers over his head, the curtains were drawn.

He was sore, seemed to be broken all to pieces—he tried to move and could not. A bandage was bound around his head and he felt as if his skull had been cloven—it was so sore.

"Where am I?" he moaned in a feeble voice.

It was heard, and a man came to the side of the berth and spoke in a clear cheerful tone:

"So—you are coming 'round, my man. You've had a close call—a very close call! Of near a hundred black and white hove ashore among the rocks, you were the only one who showed a sign of life."

"Where am I?" gasped Wilkins feebly.

"Here—take a sip of this wine. Then I'll tell you."

Wilkins swallowed a spoonful of wine placed to his lips and that with difficulty. His throat seemed raw and all filled up.

"You are on board the brig Mamie, a Baltimore and Bahama packet!" explained the man. "Did you belong to that slaver?"

"No—no—I was a passenger trying to get to New York, my home. My name is Wilkins!"

"Yes—the papers on your clothes told us that. Well, we sail for Baltimore to-morrow. You are as well off as we can make you—you will do better here than you would ashore!"

Wilkins breathed a sigh of relief. Tears of joy rolled down his wan cheeks. He was homeward bound at last!

"Take me home, and you shall be paid if it takes my last dollar!" he said.

"We're human! What we do for you is not for pay!" was the answer.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE CAPTURE—CYBELE AT SEA.

GENERALLY the little yacht belonging to Cybele Monk lay at the private dock in the shipyard belonging to the millionaire. But

sometimes, if the wind was light and she had an opposing tide, she ran in at the nearest unoccupied pier to her home.

On the occasion when she came from her voyage down the coast with the goods she had transferred from the Queen of the Sea to her spacious cabin, she ran for the private yard, because from there the goods could be carted with less danger of notice from outsiders to the place of storage selected by her father.

And to this yard, after she had with difficulty got out of the Beekman street mansion unseen, she had to go on foot, with her maid, for she dared not go on the streets alone at night. The maid was a young, nervous creature, not worth much as a protector, but better than no company at all, as the old maid said of her glass-eyed beau.

She dared not order out her carriage at that hour. It would have attracted notice which she had to avoid.

Thus it was almost twelve o'clock when she got to the yacht and roused the old sailor always left in charge, and got him to hoist mainsail and jib, and push out into the East River.

The wind blew fresh from the eastward, and as the tide was not very strong, the swift little craft instantly got headway, and as Cybele was at the tiller, she headed straight down the river.

It was not often the old sailor took the liberty of asking where she was going. Everything she did was right in his eyes, her orders his law. But it was so strange, starting off at midnight, that he ventured to say:

"You aren't goin' out to sea, be you, miss? We haven't but a little fresh water aboard, if you are!"

"No, Collins, my good man, I am only going to be out a little while. I'm to meet a friend off the Battery and have a short conference. Then I'll return—no one is to know of this trip, or report what they hear!"

"To be sure, miss. All you does is right, and it's nobody's business but yours. Shall I set the foresail?"

"No, Collins—no, we will be there in time, I think. I see the lights on Governor's Island now."

"Yes, miss—dead ahead."

At that instant the solemn tongue of St. Paul's bell told the hour of twelve.

As the yacht sped on, when she came on the tide-rip or line which marked the differing tides of the two rivers, North and East, a large black barge with a single lug sail was seen standing over across her course from the upper end of Governor's Island.

"Can that be the boat? It is very large for one person to manage," she remarked, as if speaking to herself.

The boat was now close at hand, coming on with some speed, but hardly enough to reach the Zephyr if the latter kept on.

"Is it you, Eliza?" cried Cybele.

"Yes, miss. Please luff and I'll be with you in a minute."

"Come aft and draw the jib-sheet over, Collins," ordered Cybele, as she put the helm alee.

The next instant the two boats were side by side and the old captain, who had crouched down unseen while 'Lize stood up and steered, fastened her to the fore-shrouds of the yacht as they touched, and in a second sprang on the old sailor and had him bound and gagged almost as soon as Eliza had done the same to poor Cybele, upon whom she sprang without a word of warning, though she did say to the terrified maid by her side:

"If you make a loud noise I'll kill you!"

The surprise and action did not occupy one minute of time.

The instant the old sailor was secure, Tom McCord sprang aft, and the maid insensible as she was from fright, was fully secured and laid beside her helpless mistress in the after part of the cabin.

Then while both boats drifted on the first of an ebb tide, Tom sprang into his own boat and lowered her sail and then setting the foresail of the yacht, told 'Lize to take the helm and steer down the bay, while he trimmed all the sheets to suit the quartering wind.

The yacht instantly forged ahead, towing the barge by her side, and Tom dragged the chests out of the latter and carried them below in the Zephyr. He worked like a Hercules and soon had all the contents of the boat on board the yacht.

Then he fastened the letter addressed to Mortimor Monk to the tiller of the barge and cut her adrift.

Released from the heavy drag, the pretty Zephyr bounded away over the ruffled water at a speed which astonished her captors.

Old Tom had not opened his lips while he was doing all this work. He had sprung to the labor with all the strength and energy he possessed. When he was done, the other boat cast off and the sails trimmed so as to draw their best, he sat down near Eliza, tired and panting for breath.

Looking at the two motionless forms at his feet he spoke at last.

"They're not scared to death, be they, 'Lize?"

"No, father! Few women die of fright. Miss Cybele is made of better stuff than that. You'll hear her tongue go when we get where we can set her loose! Look out for that sailor forward! He is struggling to untie your knots!"

"I'll roll him overboard if he don't keep quiet!"

"No, father, no! We've hurt no one in this piece of work, and we must not! Fasten him to the mast or carry him below."

Old Tom went and examined the ropes which, ready prepared, had been used to bind the man, secured them better, and then took him up bodily and brought him aft, where he would be under their eyes all the time.

"How long will it take us to reach the old pier?" asked Eliza, when the yacht was darting past Bedloe's Island light.

"An hour and a half at this rate, maybe. Why do you ask?" responded the old man.

"Because we will leave the maid and the old sailor there. We want no extra hands when you and I can manage the yacht. The less mouths to feed, the longer our provisions will last. As to maid-service, I have worked for Miss Cybele before and can serve her again."

A low moan and a convulsive motion in the figure of Cybele Monk told how she felt when hearing those words. But she was helpless.

"Young lady, don't fret or tire yourself out struggling," said old Tom. "We don't mean to hurt you. When we are safe away from pursuit you will be set loose and have a chance to move around. At present, keep still. We had no choice but to do what we've done to get away!"

Cybele did not moan again. But now, the moon, just rising, shone on her pale, set face, and Eliza and her father could see hereyes flashing with anger—every vein swollen with hot, angry blood, no sign of terror in her face.

The maid, pale and trembling, sobbed and wept. She had no nerve.

The old sailor was helpless, but great drops of sweat came out on his brow as he strained his muscles to try and unloose the knotted ropes about his limbs and body.

If he could have freed himself he would be willing to die in defense of his young mistress.

The boat was now close to the old pier.

'Lize spoke to the maid, whom she raised up and untied—McCord having taken the tiller.

"We are about to set you and this sailor on shore here, on an old wharf. Stay on it till daylight and you'll see boats passing, which if hailed will come to your relief."

"Oh, let me stay with my young lady! I shall die of terror if left alone in the darkness. I do not know where!" pleaded the girl.

"Silence. You are in our power. Be thankful you are treated so well. This seaman will be landed with you, and you can unloose the ropes and gag from him when we are gone. Your young mistress will not be harmed. We take her with us in self-protection. She will come back when her father sends for her. We left a note for him in the boat we cast adrift—he will soon see it. You can tell him he will hear from us, but be careful how he has us followed—there will be three deaths in this yacht before she is recaptured. Do not forget to tell him that!"

"Here we are!" cried Tom.

And as he made the exclamation he hauled in the main-sheet and luffed short around to the end of the wharf.

"Jump ashore!" he cried to the maid, as he lifted Collins up and tossed him on the wharf.

"Be quick, or I'll help you!"

Weeping bitterly, the girl bent down and kissed her mistress, and then suffered herself to be lifted on the wharf by McCord.

"Now for blue water! We soon will be free as birds on the wing!" shouted the old man, and he pushed the yacht clear, loosened out the main-sheet, and in a few seconds she headed down the bay toward the ship channel.

When day dawned the Zephyr was well off the land and going free in a fresh breeze and rough sea, was too far out to have been seen by those who were yet on the old pier.

And Cybele Monk, released from gag and bonds, sat on the cushioned transom, looking at Eliza McCord in her masculine garb—she wore the sailor suit—looking her full in the face and uttering not a single word. But there was a volume in the stern, reproachful glance she fixed on the bold face of the English girl—handsome even in its bronzed discoloration.

"For mercy's sake, speak, Miss Cybele!" cried 'Lize, unable to stand that silent look of reproach. "Say what you like, curse me if you will—I deserve and expect it, but don't, don't look at me so! I can't bear it!"

Cybele did not speak, but she turned her eyes on the old man, and scanned him from head to foot.

"She's goin' crazy!" he muttered. "I do believe she is! I'll take the helm! You look out for her, 'Lize; she may try to jump overboard!"

'Lize resigned the tiller to him, and standing before Cybele with clasped hands, she again implored her to speak—to say something.

"I'll change my clothes—I have dresses on board—I'll be a woman again and wait on you on my bended knees. Do speak to me, Miss Cybele!"

"You a woman? You never were, you never can be a woman! A woman has a heart, conscience, human feeling! Wretch—the curse of my father's breaking heart be on you! This will kill him!"

She had spoken at last, and the words poured from her lips like a torrent of fire.

Lize folded her arms over her throbbing bosom and bowed her head as she replied:

"Go on! Go on! I deserve it all. But cast no look of hatred on my father—on that old man, for all this was my plan, my work! Hunted by the bloodhounds of the law, no place of safety on American soil, no hope of mercy if once arrested, we had to find means of deliverance. We have found them—you will suffer only a brief separation from those you love, but in that we find life and liberty!"

"Where are you going to take me?"

Coldly, without one pleading look, Cybele asked the question.

"First to *Bermuda*, in this craft, thence to England in a larger vessel for safety, if I have to buy one!" answered Tom McCord.

"And you think you can make all that voyage without pursuit? Fool that you are! My father will spend millions to find his child. The sea will be black with vessels sent out to find me!"

"Ay, and the search will be vain. This craft sails like a frightened bird. In three days I will be hidden in haunts well known to me, and there we will wait till I can safely spread wings for the English shore. There, while I wait for your father to come and reclaim you, I will lead you to your mother's grave—she who was as like to you, when she died, as you are to yourself!"

"My mother? Old man, did you ever see her?"

"Yes, lady—I was born on the great Strathmere estate. I saw her as a happy bride. And I saw her when the sudden shock of a deadly duel, fought right before her eyes, sent her into convulsions from which she never rallied. She died in your father's arms, and I, terror-bound, stood awe-stricken under the trees over the dead body of Lord Eggleston. And then I saw and took up a paper I have kept ever since—I know not why—but I kept it and here it is. Take it; your father will want it by and by!"

The old man drew out a pocket-book, black and worn with long use. From it—a creased paper with a coronet on the back, yellow with age.

Mechanically, Cybele reached out her hand. She took the paper. Opening it, she read it in a trembling tone:

"STRATHMERE:—We two cannot live on one earth. You or I must die. I wait for you beneath the oak known as the trysting-tree. Our swords shall decide the issue between us, known to none beside."
"EGGLESTON."

Trembling now, her eyes full of tears, Cybele rose. Placing the letter of proof inside the bosom of her dress for safety, she said gently:

"I do not hate either of you now. Turn the yacht and go back with me to my father. He will forgive, as I forgive, and he will reward you to the limit of your desire. Free and rich, you shall go with us to England. Oh, turn and take me back!"

"Lady, I dare not!" exclaimed McCord, showing deep feeling. "I do not doubt but you and your father would be lenient, too lenient with us. But the bloodhounds of the law are after us! The police are searching day and night for us, and once in their hands, all your father's wealth could not save us from years on years of dismal prison life—worse, ten thousand times worse than death. Go with us till we are beyond their reach. You shall be treated with every respect. Go with us till we are safe, and without any condition you shall return to your father!"

Tom spoke with impressive energy. He did not seem rough or cruel, he seemed like one asking a favor that was like life itself to him.

Cybele was moved. She turned to Eliza.

"Go—put on the dress of your sex and I will feel that you are a woman still. I will go to Bermuda without another word of dispute. There you will be safe and I will expect you to redeem your promise!"

Lize hurried below. She was gone but a little time, but when she came upon deck again, but for her shorn hair, in dress and looks, she was again a handsome woman.

Cybele tried to smile. But it was through her tears. She thought how her father must feel when her absence would be discovered. He would learn from the papers she left whither she had gone—but he could have no idea of her fate when she failed to return.

"I will get breakfast for you, Miss Cybele—we have plenty of provisions and we must eat to live."

Saying this, Eliza went below.

CHAPTER XLV.

HOPE AND FEAR—WHAT NEXT?

MORTIMOR MONK was an early riser. Up before, or with the sun, he would bathe, and then,

going to his library, ring for a cup of strong coffee, which he drank as habitually as if he were an old sea-captain or a soldier in the field.

This cleared his brain, he said, and he generally spent an hour until his breakfast-time over some choice book, for his library was as well stocked as any of a private nature in the city. History, the Chronicles of the quaint Froissart, and the recent and very popular works of Sir Walter Scott, were his favorites.

Having on the day before invited Captain Barnacle to breakfast with him at the mansion, and to hold a long conference afterward upon some new avenues of trade which he thought of opening, on this special morning he had ordered that breakfast should be served an hour later than usual—that is, not until nine o'clock.

The tact and judgment of the young captain in his management of the Cuban venture had impressed Mr. Monk very much.

"You have done far better than I, or either member of my firm, would have done, under the circumstances!" he had said, when Barnacle rendered his account. "There is a fortune in your brain, young man!"

Thus it was after eight, almost nine, before the old gentleman, missing the usual early carresses of his daughter, who almost always came to escort him from the library to the breakfast-room, sent a servant to inquire if she was ill.

In a brief time the servant returned, alarm visible on her face.

"The young mistress is not in her chamber!" she cried. "Nor does she seem to have been there during the night. Her bed has not been disturbed since I made it up yesterday morning—and that of her maid in the anteroom is in the same condition!"

"She must have gone to some other chamber," said the old man, rising to his feet; "she kissed me at ten o'clock last night, as usual, before retiring, called her maid and went to her chamber. Look all over the house—hurry, hurry!"

The old man went up to Cybele's chamber himself to satisfy his anxiety.

She evidently had not touched her bed. But on her toilet-table he saw a small package. On the outside of the paper enveloping it these words were written:

"If anything happens to prevent my speedy return from the adventure which the inclosed letter calls for, open and read it, and take measures to help me, for I shall come back before morning, if I am not forcibly detained. I go for the sake of my beloved father."
CYBELE."

Trembling from head to foot, almost choked with vague terror, Mr. Monk tore open the package and read the letter written and signed by Eliza McCord.

Staggering down to his library, he found Barnacle there, the latter having just come in.

"My child! My child!" gasped the stricken father—"I fear the worst! She has been stolen away, carried off, or she would be here! Read that!"

He placed the paper, with its superscription, in the hands of the young captain.

De Lorme, on crutches and yet very feeble, entered the room at this moment.

"What is the matter? Is my Cousin Cybele ill?" he asked, noticing her absence and the pallid face of her father.

"Worse—far worse! For all we know she may be dead. She must have gone out before midnight to meet those accursed wretches, McCord and his daughter, and she has not returned."

De Lorme sunk with a groan into the nearest chair. Very weak, his wound had not progressed favorably of late, his nervous system was almost wrecked.

Only Barnacle was cool and collected, though he was pale with fear and his heart throbbed with silent agony.

"Send a servant for the chief of police and spread the alarm through him and have a force sent in search!" he cried. "I will hasten to the battery, take a boat there, and scour all the vicinity, and perhaps get some trace from vessels anchored there or thereabout. Do not despair—she shall be found!"

And away he started, the blessing of the half-crazed father breathed on his head as he disappeared.

A low moan breaking from the lips of De Lorme called his attention, and he saw the invalid had fainted. The nearest physician was called and the most powerful restoratives applied. The young man became conscious, but he had to be carried to his chamber. The wound had been badly inflamed from the start, and had not healed. The wounded arteries were in danger of sloughing and reopening, and the surgeon said in that case death would surely follow.

Alarmed for the life of his nephew, in agony over his daughter's fate, poor old Mortimor Monk could hardly talk to Chief Hays when he came in to learn the facts.

He gave the latter the letter and its superscription as a clue and guidance.

The chief did not pause a second after reading it.

"Do not worry yourself to death!" he said to the old man, "I will turn out my whole force in search. They shall all be found!"

And he hurried off to commence his work.

In less than an hour he came in with the letter found in the boat. The old barge had drifted up on the eddy tide and floated into a dock just above Castle Garden, where it was found by one of his officers.

"Money—a ransom is demanded. They can have it—her weight in gold, ay, in diamonds if I had them, would be nothing to me in comparison to the return of my daughter in safety!" cried the millionaire when he read the letter. "Do you believe the wretch has taken her to England?"

"No," said the chief, who had brought the letter found by his officer. "The yacht is too small to cross the ocean. She was not provisioned to carry so many—for even if there were but this McCord and his girl, the sailor, maid and your daughter would make five to feed for a voyage of many weeks at least, if it could be accomplished at all. No—this has been written to throw us off the scent—to hide the real plan. They are lurking somewhere near—perhaps in some of the bays or creeks up the Sound—maybe up the North River. They will be found, and soon—do not despair, Mr. Monk—do not despair."

And again he hurried away to superintend the movements of his searching parties.

Not knowing where to go, or what else to do, Mr. Monk waited to receive reports in his house. He had not eaten a morsel of food—all wish or thought of that was gone. From the chamber of his suffering nephew, to the empty room of his daughter and thence down to his library he wandered half-distracted until past mid-day.

Then Captain Barnacle came in, and he brought news. He had taken the most feasible plan to get some trace of a vessel so remarkable as the white-hulled and pretty yacht.

He had hired the fastest boat and best crew he could get at Whitehall, near the Battery. Under canvas and oars he had gone down the bay, hailing every vessel he met or passed and making inquiries.

When just below Quarantine, he ran alongside of a Shrewsbury oyster sloop, and on it, to his glad surprise, found the maid and sailor who had been put on shore at the old pier.

From them he learned that the yacht, after leaving them, was steered directly out to sea by the ship channel. Collins, the sailor, was an old pilot, and he said at daylight, she was outside, steering off but a little to the east of south, nearly hull down, yet he knew her sails too well to be mistaken.

"Then they will seek refuge down the coast, or steer for Bermuda," was the comment made by Barnacle. "I will follow in the Queen of the Sea."

Heaving about, after he had taken Collins and the maid on board his boat, Barnacle at once steered back for the city. He, alone, with all the police at fault, was on the real track of the abducted girl and her captors.

While going up he questioned Collins as to their manner of surprise and capture, and their treatment after it had been effected.

He shuddered at the thought of poor Cybele rudely cast on the deck of the schooner, tied and gagged, but he felt some relief in the thought she would be released when outside where she could give no alarm.

Collins told how he lay on that old wharf for almost an hour before the maid could succeed in unloosing the ropes knotted tightly about his limbs and body.

After he had got on his feet and seen the last of the boat after the dawn of day, seeing a house back among the stunted cedars, he and the maid had gone there to seek relief.

The house was unoccupied, but the embers of a recent fire, food cooked and uncooked, clothing and arms in the shape of pistols and knives told that it had recently been occupied.

Near it a pit four or five feet deep, freshly opened and the mark of boxes drawn recently from it, suggested that buried property had been taken up.

Finding no one about the house they hurried back to the pier and there waited for relief. It did not come until near noon and then they hailed the oyster-sloop and were taken off.

On his way up the bay Barnacle was busy thinking what had best be done.

Steering right for the dock where the Queen of the Sea was made fast he ran alongside, paid off the boat's crew and then sprung on his own deck.

Calling up both his mates, he ordered them to get an extra weight of ballast as fast as it could be done—enough to stiffen her up to carry a press of sail.

Also to get in stores—wood, water and provisions for a month's voyage, just as rapidly as it could be effected. He expected to be ordered to sea before sunset.

Extra labor was to be hired—haste—haste, was the cry.

Then, his orders given, he hurried with the sailor and Cybele's maid to report to Mr. Monk.

"Bless you—Heaven reward you—you have news of my child!" cried Mr. Monk, as he saw Barnacle enter the library and who came with him.

"Yes, sir—and soon I will have better than news. I will overtake the yacht, either at sea or find her in any hiding-place she seeks. The Queen of the Sea will be ready to go in pursuit before the set of sun to-day, and I will follow the course the yacht held when last seen."

"I will go with you myself," said the millionaire. "Restore my child to my arms and no favor you ask of me, were it all my fortune, shall be refused."

The face of the young captain flushed a rosy red. The thought darted through his mind—there was but *one* favor on earth he craved—would it ever be *his*?

"We will be ballasted, provisioned and prepared for sea in a few hours," he responded. "I will go to the Custom and clear for the coast and Bermuda in ballast."

"Do! I will see my partners and let them know where I am going!"

Then while the old man heard the story of Collins and the maid, Barnacle hurried off on his errand, meeting the chief as he went out and sending him in to see the two whom he brought up the bay.

The chief, the moment he heard the story, told them they had no doubt been in the hiding-place by the sea, in which the burglar and his daughter had been concealed while they planned their last desperate venture. He would send men down to search the place and look over its surroundings.

Mr. Monk had to tell his nephew what he intended to do, to go in person on the Queen in search of Cybele.

"I must go also!" said De Lorme. "If I do not, I shall never live to see her here. I am on the verge of the dark river now. I know my condition. But a thin fiber exists between the gaping wound in my thigh and the great femoral artery. And it weakens hour by hour. I feel and know it. When it breaks I shall pass away almost in a breath. I do not fear to die, but I wish, oh, so much, to see her safe with you before I go! I *must* go with you! Take my doctor if you choose, but hear my dying prayer and let me go on the vessel with you! She was my first command—only for a day, let me die in her cabin!"

"You shall go—but I hope you will live to see Cybele and come back with her!" exclaimed the old gentleman, deeply affected.

Barnacle surprised the authorities when he demanded, at the Custom-house, a clearance for Bermuda in ballast, with a permit to look into Southern ports on the coast if he found it necessary in his search for the stolen yacht and her abducted owner.

The collector would have refused it if he dared, but he had not forgotten that Barnacle had official influence at Washington, and the clearance and permit were made out. But he gave the captain a parting shot. It was this:

"I have heard from your 'deserter,' Ebenezer Wilkins! He is on his way home! You may have an official call from me on his statement, when you return, if indeed you think it safe to meet him!"

CHAPTER XLVI.

AT SEA IN THE WAKE OF THE ZEPHYR.

WHEN Captain Barnacle left the Custom-house, he went at once to his vessel and found, as he had ordered, over fifty longshoremen, in addition to his crew, engaged in getting in ballast, wood, water and stores.

"Be ready for sea by sunset—we are cleared and I will not wait an hour beyond that time!" was the last order he gave Mr. Barnard as he started for Beekman street.

There he found all in confusion. The master was not only preparing for the voyage, but the surgeon was getting poor De Lorme ready, as he privately told the captain, for a comfortable death and burial.

"He *may* live to see Bermuda, if we go there, but I doubt it," explained the doctor. "He fails fast and the tissue between the wound and the artery is almost as thin as air!"

Barnacle was sorry to see him go, for an invalid is not a desirable shipmate. But it was the will of Mr. Monk, as well as the prayer of poor De Lorme. It could not be avoided.

Collins and the maid were to go—the first as a pilot and to help man the yacht when retaken—the latter to rejoin her young mistress. For Barnacle did not for an instant doubt but he would overtake the yacht either on the coast or at Bermuda. And of course when she was overtaken—the rescue of Cybele would be effected.

The threat of "three deaths" on the yacht before he submitted to recapture, Barnacle considered as an idle boast made by McCord.

Just as the golden rays of the setting sun were lingering on the roofs and spires of the Empire City, the Hunchback Millionaire, with his nephew carried on a litter, went on board the Queen of the Sea.

Her mainsail was then up—her other sails loosed ready for hoisting, two single ropes held her at her moorings, and the minute the owner was on board and De Lorme laid on a cot in the roomy main-cabin, Barnacle himself gave the word:

"Cast loose, *all*! Shove her clear of the

wharf—up jib and foresail—aloft, topmen, and loose topsail and top-gallant-sail!"

In a minute the sharp-built craft was moving, and as she headed out in the stream and caught the breeze, her headway increased till with all the sail she needed she went down by Governor's Island at almost racing speed.

Barnacle never was so careful as now to get her in exact trim to make all that could be got out of her, and in person he kept the deck till he had every sail drawing its best—every tack and sheet just right.

Then he set the watches, the second mate on the larboard, Barnard in the starboard, calculating to be on deck most of the time himself.

Night was on them by the time they reached Quarantine ground, but that mattered not—there was no trouble in going to sea by compass, soundings, and the bearings of well-known lights.

When they came down to the vicinity of the pier, where Collins and the maid were put on shore, and the former was in the act of pointing out the old house they had visited, it was seen to be on fire. Sheets of flame were bursting from the roof—the old Rookery or haunted house was doomed. How it was fired, they could not tell—they had no time for inquiries or search.

When the schooner stood out to sea, with a wind which allowed her to head southeast by south for an offing, and then to run with sheets eased off for four points more on her course, Mr. Monk asked Barnacle her rate of speed.

The log was tried. It gave eight knots in a good to-gallant breeze, in a tumbling ground swell.

"The yacht is fast, but she cannot do so well in such a wind," said the millionaire. "If we are in her wake we will gain on her every hour, and 'tis but a question of time to overhaul her!"

"How is your nephew?" asked Barnacle, who had not been in the cabin once since they made sail.

"Easy. He went to sleep quiet as a lamb after we got him on his cot. He is contented now. And the doctor says it is better for him to be here. If we had left him at home he would not have lived three days. His time is short at best, poor fellow. It is terrible to think he should be the victim of that murderous little wretch—just entering into a vigorous manhood, full of promise!"

"It is cruel," responded Barnacle. "But there is an overruling Power whose will we cannot thwart, whose decisions we all must obey!"

A late supper was now set in the cabin, and for the first time since the night before Mortimor Monk and Barnacle sat down to eat. They had fed on excitement all that day, thinking of nothing but the trouble on hand.

Several sails were passed in the night, but as all were heading south none of them were hailed from the Queen of the Sea.

Mr. Monk was induced to take a berth and try for sleep after supper. He did not know that Barnacle had given him his own bed and state-room.

"A blanket on a cabin-trunk where I can be called in a second if needed is all the bed I want," he said to his steward when the latter remonstrated and said he ought to enjoy his usual comfort.

Not long after daylight, off the southern part of the Jersey coast, they were hailed by a Delaware Bay pilot-boat, asking if they were bound in.

Replying in the negative, Barnacle asked if a small yacht, very sharp and low in the water, schooner rigged, had been seen by those on the pilot-boat.

"Was she painted white?" asked the chief pilot.

"Yes! Snow-white, with a gilt figurehead—a winged angel."

"She passed here—ten miles outside the light-ship an hour or two before dark, going free and sailing like a witch," was the answer. "We ran out to speak her, but she head-reached us by a full mile and we crossed her wake."

"Thanks to Him who doeth all things well!" said Mortimor Monk reverently, when he heard this. "Not more than fifteen hours ahead at most."

And he went in to tell poor Alva De Lorme what they had heard.

But his wan face was already aglow with a hopeful light—his ear had caught the hail and the answer as soon as both were uttered.

"I will live to see her," he said, in a whisper. He could not speak louder.

Then he turned to his doctor and in an imploring tone pleaded:

"Give me wine—such food as I can bear. Keep me up a little longer. I can't die yet. I *must* live till Cybele is found!"

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE ZEPHYR WINGED FOR FLIGHT.

AFTER she had calmed down and said she would go as far as Bermuda without another word of objection, Cybele Monk occupied her cabin in a state of perfect resignation to what she could not avoid.

One or the other of her captors had to be at the helm all the time, for she would not then assist in the navigation of a vessel no longer virtually her own.

Partaking of food and drink, so as not to lose strength, locking herself into her little state-room at night for sleep, she determined to make the best she could of her situation.

From the moment she succumbed so far as to say she would go to Bermuda without further dispute, old Tom McCord and his daughter had been humble in both word and action, showing her every respect.

"Have you any idea what course to take to reach Bermuda?" she asked of Tom, just after they passed the Capes of Delaware.

"Pretty near, miss," he said. "When I came to this country I sailed from Bermuda in a turtle sloop, bound to Charleston. We steered west by south, I remember, and then didn't allow quite enough for the Gulf Stream, and made land twenty or thirty miles to the northward of the port. I thought I'd run down to Charleston and then make across to the eastward."

"I have a book and some charts in the locker under the steward's cupboard which might help you. It is a coast pilot, and it has courses laid down for many near ports, Bermuda among the rest, and the set and speed of the currents you have to cross. It may help you if you take a look at it."

"Thankee, miss. As I am not gifted with much education and only a fair share of horse-sense, if you would only be so kind as to look over the book and tell me how to steer to reach the island, I would be humbly thankful."

"And so assist you to run away with me?" she said, smiling archly—the first time he had seen a smile on her lovely face.

"It's not that exactly, miss—though it does look that way. You'd assist me to keep clear of rocks, shoals and points I know nothing of, and help to keep your own life out of peril. Frankly, I don't know anything of this coast. I have got a general idea of where Bermuda lays. And I know there is a Cape Hatteras, a mighty gruesome place; I saw its breakers once a heap nearer than I wanted to see 'em. But I don't know just where Hatteras is, or just how to steer clear of it. I *do* wish you'd help me in navigation a bit."

"If I do—give you the course to Bermuda, and one that will throw you at once outside all coast dangers, will you and Eliza give me your word of honor I shall go ashore when I get there, and be free to live at a hotel until my father is heard from or comes to get me? On my part, if you do, I will agree to remain there at the hotel, saying nothing which can compromise you until I am allowed to leave with your consent."

Tom glanced at his daughter, read assent in her eyes, and at once said:

"Yes, miss, we do agree to that, and even more if you ask it, for I feel as if you would do kindly by us if you had us in your power. So look at your books and charts, and as you bid me steer, on that course we head."

Cybele at once got out her coast pilot and her charts, and she also laid out a quadrant to get their latitude with at the next noon, for she had made navigation one of her studies for pleasure.

After she had laid off the course from a sight and estimated distance—Henlopen Light was in sight on their lee quarter ten miles off—she came on deck.

"Our course, Captain McCord," said she, "allowing for the Gulf Stream, which we have to cross and to keep us well outside of Hatteras, will be southeast by south until we are past the latitude of Hatteras, and then we'll bear off one point more to the south. As I undertake the duty of navigator, I'll take my turn in steering!"

"No, kind lady, no—you're in command now. Lize and I will stand the watches. You know neither of us leaves the deck except to eat."

And old Tom was in earnest in wishing to do all the work aided by his daughter.

"I shall *insist* on doing my share, since you are so willing to meet my wishes!" said Cybele, firmly, but kindly.

And she had her way.

Thus heading so far from the coast line, Cybele, without dreaming of it, actually ran away from those who were following, as they hoped, in her wake.

The little yacht seemed to know her when the sheets were trimmed in and taking the tiller she luffed to the new course. The Zephyr, with her lee-rail down to the edge of the water, dry as a non-baptismal church, rode the long, heaving seas like a living thing of grace and beauty, as she flew along rapidly.

On the second day out she got a good meridian altitude of the sun with her quadrant, worked up the sight and found she had nothing to fear from Hatteras—it was out of sight and almost due west from her position.

That day they made fine headway, and being in three watches now had no cause to do more than slack or flatten in sheets when the wind varied a little, as it did once in a while.

Cybele was now quite cheerful. She seemed to realize that her father would send or come in search of her, and the fact that her mind was

much occupied in her duty as navigator, kept her from despondency. In truth, the others now depended on her guidance—mind was the conqueror, intellect the victor, and she was mistress of the yacht in almost every sense.

On the third day out she changed her course considerably, thinking she had too much easting.

On the fourth day her noon observation placed her within forty miles of the latitude of Bermuda, and she bade her "crew" keep a sharp lookout that afternoon lest she should run by.

When night drew near, there were several evidences that they were near land. A couple of those little brown doves so plentiful in Florida and in all the Southern islands came near the vessel, circled around it and then flew away in a westerly direction.

Again, one of those huge birds known as the buzzard, never seen far from land, flew over them and it headed west.

Cybele was about to give the order to lay to for the night, for it was now near sunset, when a sail was seen nearly ahead, and being quite a small sloop, it was not far away.

A half-hour brought them within hail of the sloop, and from her they learned that Bermuda bore almost due west about twenty miles.

Had it been a clear day, with a good glass, low as the island was, they should have seen it at dark.

Steering west, under only the jib and mainsail, the Zephyr headed for her destination. There was no sleep on her that night. Cybele felt her responsibility, and, moreover, she had a lingering hope that she would see the Queen of the Sea in the harbor when she got there. For she had already begun to observe how Barnacle felt toward her, and if she did not reciprocate his love, which was yet a question, she felt sure he would search far and wide till he found her.

At midnight, Tom McCord found soundings with the hand-lead, and they waited for day, heaving to with the jib-sheet drawn over and the main-boom over the chock-block and the helm alee.

When day dawned the town of Hamilton was in plain sight, and Tom, who knew the harbor well, told Cybele he would run into the harbor and land her at a point where she would find conveyance to the hotel. He offered her money, but she showed him a full purse of gold which she had in her pocket when she left home.

Tom told her, also, he would lay the yacht in a snug cove near by and daily he, or Eliza in her proper dress, would visit her and obey her desires whatever they were.

"You have kept faith with us," he explained, "and we will more than keep faith with you. We will wait till you see or hear from your father and friends. Then, what you think is best for us, we will listen to!"

Cybele was content. She took a conveyance to the best hotel after landing, and calling for the best room paid a week's board in advance, saying she had landed from her yacht and let her crew go on a cruise.

Her money and her beauty, and evident gentility, were an all-sufficient introduction, and she was received with every courtesy and attention.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE QUEEN OF THE SEA AND HER CRUISE—THE END FOR POOR DE LORME.

CAPTAIN BARNACLE kept well in with the coast, as he steered to the south, arguing in his mind that McCord, in so small a craft, would not go far from reach of a harbor if bad weather rose.

After he left the pilot-boat off Jersey, which had told about seeing the yacht, he spoke a good many vessels, but no one on them happened to have seen a schooner bearing a likeness to the Zephyr.

But Barnacle stood on, and going on the inside of Hatteras through the Swash Channel to avoid the Gulf, headed as he had first intended, for an offing outside of Charleston, still making inquiry off of every little port for the white-hulled craft that carried his heart's only hope.

But after she had been seen just above Cape May no tidings could be obtained of her. Off Charleston three pilot-boats were spoken—two were cruising one way just out of port.

They were confident no such vessel had entered the harbor, or been seen outside of it.

"I am sorry we did not steer for Bermuda at once," said Barnacle. "There is where we will find Miss Cybele!"

"If she is not at the bottom of the ocean!" said Mortimor Monk, who had lost heart and fallen into gloomy despondency.

The schooner was headed for Bermuda, now, under all the sail she could carry with a fresh and favoring wind.

Alva De Lorme was still kept alive by stimulants, but he was slowly sinking away. Strange to say, he did not give Cybele up as her own father was doing.

"God is good," he said, in a whisper, talking to Barnacle. "He will not let me die till I have seen her. I feel it here."

And he placed his thin, wasted hand over his faint-throbbing heart.

A day and a night on her course brought the Queen of the Sea nearly to Bermuda, and the next day, a clear and a glorious one even for those nearly tropic seas, land was sighted, and the schooner headed for the anchorage used by vessels of the larger class.

A British three-decker and two frigates lay well off-shore in safe anchorage, a part of the British fleet in Southern waters.

Just after the Queen of the Sea rounded to and dropped her anchor, a boat from the port came off, with a health officer on board, and to the first inquiry made by Barnacle came the reply:

"Such a yacht was here, landed a lady who is at the hotel, and then went on a cruise."

"The hotel—is it far away? How can I get there?" cried Mr. Monk, almost wild with excitement.

"It is some ways up—in Hamilton—you could have gone up the channel, to anchor, much further, with a pilot and been close at hand," said the official.

"There she comes! We have no need to go a fathom further! There she comes!" shouted Barnacle, almost wild with joy.

And in a small skiff, rowed by two shiny negroes, clad in snow-white garments, a contrast to their skins dark as ebony, Cybele Monk, lovely as a fairy, came alongside.

Springing on deck, she was in her father's outstretched arms in one second, literally be-showered by the tears of joy which poured from his eyes as he kissed her again and again.

"I knew you would come to find me!" she exclaimed to Barnacle, a minute later, as she pressed the hand of the brave, true-hearted mariner. "I have waited here three long, weary days for you!"

Then turning again to her father, she asked:

"How did you leave Cousin Alva?"

"Alas, poor Alva—come and see!" was his answer.

He took her by the hand and led her into the cabin.

One glance at the wan face, the thin, wasted figure on the cot, and Cybele Monk knew that another visitor besides herself stood by that bedside. It was DEATH.

"You have come, oh my love! I am content—I am so tired, but I had to wait!"

This he said in a quick, gasping whisper as she knelt and bent above his white face—then there was a flutter on his lips—a choking effort to speak again—but he could not. A little shiver, one longing look from his dark eyes, and he was still.

The surgeon closed his eyes and said:

"Be thankful, he can suffer no more. He has been dying for a week!"

Cybele knelt beside the poor boy's body and cried as if her heart would break. It had come so suddenly upon her. She had not dreamed he was in real danger on the night when she stole out with her maid to meet Eliza McCord.

But the shedding of tears did her good. The floodgates of sorrow let loose, eased the weight of the grief which bore her down.

After a time she became more composed, and going out where Barnacle and her father stood looking over the low green hills, the white houses and the pretty fields in sight, joined them.

To their eager inquiries as to how she had fared, she responded tersely and truly.

She gave Tom McCord and Eliza full credit for their good conduct, after she was alone with them on the sea, and how respectful and obedient they had been when she took the navigation of the yacht into her own hands.

"I was willing to come here," she stated, "because I thought you would seek me here, as you have!"

"Not until we had run the whole length of the coast to Charleston!" said the captain. "That was my fault. I did not believe McCord would dare go off outside the Gulf in so small a craft!"

"He would not. It was I who laid the course and navigated the yacht to Bermuda!" was the response of Cybele.

She was proud of her nautical accomplishments.

"You angel!"

"Captain—you are irreverent. I am of earth and earthly. Angels are supposed to dwell in heaven."

"Pardon me. I am so happy, that I believe I am nearly insane. I will try not to offend again."

"Where is Tom McCord and his daughter?" asked Mortimor Monk, coming to the rescue of both blushing parties.

"Near at hand, where I can send for them if you will forgive them, my father."

"Send for them. I would reward them for letting me know grief, that I might realize the bliss of this hour. Send for them."

Cybele took a note-book from her pocket, penciled a few words on a piece of paper, called to her boatmen and gave them the paper and some orders in a low tone, which no one else heard.

Entering their skiff they rowed through a

narrow channel to the north, and were lost to view in a few moments.

"They will be here within an hour," she told her father. "And I shall introduce McCord by a name you will remember—not by his false name linked with crime. He was once a faithful servant on the estate where he, as well as you, was born."

"Strathmere?"

"Yes—he has given me full proof of that, as you will see ere long. Oh, my father, were it not for that cold form which is in the cabin, I would not regret one thing that has happened. When he whom you now know as McCord reveals his real name and other things he has told me, you may well say you will forgive all the past. I do not know all his story, but this I have gathered. He was led into crime by bad associates, and fled with them from England to New York, with his daughter. There he continued in crime, and you know the result of that."

"His real name, do you know it?"

"If he speaks truth, yes."

"What is it?"

"What was the name of the head game-keeper in the Strathmere Forest?"

"Egbert Sherwood—I remember the grim old man well."

"He had a son—Hubert Sherwood?"

"Ay—the under-keeper. A brave, reckless lad, given to drink and gay companionship."

"Hubert Sherwood, who married Ella McCool, in the great castle, and Tom McCord, are one and the same."

"You amaze me. Ellen McCool was a favorite in the castle—my mother's maid. She turned her off, because she married Sherwood, and she bore a girl-child and died. Now I know how McCord recognized me on that terrible night. I have hunted with him many a day."

CHAPTER XLIX.

RECONCILIATION AND NEWS.

"LOOK! The yacht! Ah, how pretty she is coming toward us, wing and wing, with a wall of foam on either bow."

This exclamation came from the lips of Captain Barnacle, who was the first to see the Zephyr as she swept toward the Queen, with the skiff in tow and the two black boatmen grinning on her deck.

"She does not look as if she had roughed it for so many days on the sea with a scanty crew to keep her in trim?" exclaimed Cybele, in an interrogative tone.

"She looks as nice as if she was just out of dock," was the response.

Eliza was at the helm—her father looked to the halliards and sheets, assisted by the two colored boatmen in Cybele's employ.

When yet a cable's length away from the schooner, the sails of the yacht were lowered and stowed neatly, and yet under full steerage-way the boat sped along, and with a deft turn of the tiller, Eliza brought her around and fairly alongside the larger schooner.

In a minute fastenings secured her there, and then Eliza and her father stood on the quarter-deck of the Queen, in the presence of the Hunchback Millionaire and his daughter.

"Hubert Sherwood, your hand!" said the old man—kindness in his look and tone. "I have not forgotten when you struck down with your broad hunting-blade the wounded stag which had me under its feet in Strathmere Forest!"

"My lord—you are too kind. Can you forgive me and my erring girl?"

And the eyes of the old captain filled with tears while he spoke.

"Yes—the daughter of Ellen McCool can never be held in hatred by a Strathmere!"

And the hand of the millionaire was reached out to Eliza.

"Can you not now dispense with one thing which doth not belong to you, my lord?" asked Sherwood.

Respectfully he spoke, but either purposely, or for some other reason no response came from the millionaire.

"Have you given him the paper I confided to your care, Miss Cybele?" asked the old captain.

"No—I waited for you to be present to explain," she answered.

She now handed her father the original challenge written and signed by Lord Eggleston, and dropped by his opponent as he rushed to meet him in battle.

Slowly, word by word, his eyes moist with feeling, the father read it.

"I had that in my hand, my lord, when the shriek of your young wife rung on the air and you rushed to her side to catch her falling form. I felt I had no right to be there, and I stole away. That night I got into trouble and had to flee, and years passed before I knew that you also was a disguised fugitive from your home, your title and your legal rights!"

"My rights? What know you of them?"

"That you are the true and only Lord of Strathmere, that the countess dowager, your mother, very old, but true in her love for her last and youngest-born son, now the only one, yet lives and hopes for your return!"

"Lives! Are you sure?"

"Ask him who floats the admiral's flag on that three-decker in the harbor. I saw him but yesterday and he knew me, for he, like you, has hunted by my side in Strathmere Wood."

"His name?"

"Stephen Mowbray, Earl of Cottswold and Admiral of the Blue in the Royal Navy. Is it not time now, my lord, to throw off the hateful disguise which mars a noble form?"

"It is," said the millionaire, and he went alone into the cabin.

He was gone near half an hour. And then—there appeared the same noble face, but no hunchback* was there. A form fully six feet high, as straight and perfect as any living man could boast, dressed elegantly with a knightly decoration on the breast, came from the cabin.

Advancing and clasping the hands of Cybele within his own, this noble-looking being said:

"Daughter, as I have cast down the ungainly burden borne for long, weary years by MORTIMOR MONK on his shoulders, so let that name drop forever. Henceforth—under my own name and in my own proper person, I will claim and deserve thy love."

"Father, no matter in what shape, loved and loving, while I stand wonder-stricken, my heart goes up to the vaults of Heaven in thanks for the relief you must feel!"

"Look! There comes the barge of the admiral!" cried Hubert Sherwood, as we must now know him. "He is going to the town—may I not hail him and call him on board?"

"Ay. I would see if he remembers me," was the response.

The barge with its four-and-twenty oars, double-banked, two rowers on a thwart, came on up the harbor with the blue flag in the bow, and springing into the skiff Hubert Sherwood rowed out to meet it.

"My lord admiral," said he, an old man on that American schooner has a very important message which he will speak to you alone. He bade me tell you so."

"Steer for the schooner," said the admiral, to the midshipman at the yoke of the barge.

Alongside the schooner, he rose to meet an extended hand which helped him to the deck of the Queen of the Sea. And the admiral looked searchingly in the noble face before him.

"Can the dead return to life?" he gasped. "Strathmere in face and form!"

"Ay, and in heart yet true to the friendship of our earliest days at Eton!"

"Strathmere—whom we mourned as dead, alive? Break it softly to thy mother, if she hath not heard it, break it softly, or she will die of joy. 'Tis but a year since I talked with her of you and tears were in her eyes when she said you were reported dead, but till she saw your grave she would yet cherish hope!"

"Come into my cabin, admiral. I have a sad face to show you there, and then I would have a brief conference of explanation. But first, my lord, take the hand of Cybele, my daughter!"

"Lady Cybele, the picture of the loveliest woman that ever graced the royal court of England, I greet you."

And the admiral kissed the hand he touched.

Then the two old noblemen entered the cabin. They were there nearly an hour. When they came out Lord Strathmere said:

"To-morrow, aided by your chaplain, I will bury my nephew on shore. The next day I sail for England."

"May heaven's bright sun shine on every league of the way!" responded the admiral, as he bowed low to Cybele and reentered his barge.

"Hubert Sherwood, bring all you have on board the Queen of the Sea. You and your daughter will go to England with us."

"And the yacht which I restore to the Lady Cybele, what is to become of her?" asked the old gamekeeper, when spoken to by Lord Strathmere.

"I shall send her back to New York with Collins and a couple more of men who can aid him to take her home. She may be needed there by and by. When Captain Barnacle takes my place as senior partner of my house in that city he may wish to go yachting once in a while."

Barnacle did not speak though he heard this. The transformation, the opening up of mysteries undreamed of, all coming one upon the other with panoramic rapidity had fairly magnetized him.

"I seem as if in a dream!" he said, when he stood alone with Cybele in the cabin of the Zephyr.

"I hope the dream is pleasant!" she said, softly, as she laid the hand on which his ring glittered in his hot palm.

"I fear to wake from it!" was his tremulous response. "As Cybele Monk, a merchant's daughter, I dared to look on you with eyes illumined by the star of Hope. As the child of one of England's proud and wealthy peers, how dare I, only an humble seaman—a poor American—how dare I, I repeat, think you can care

*A hunchback was for years the favorite disguise of one of the greatest detectives ever known in New York. Assumed in only one house, his own, his best friends did not penetrate it.

for me! I can love on hopelessly till I die—that is all I see before me!"

"Captain Barnacle, I thought you were a brave man?"

"Who says I am not?"

"Yourself. If I am worth the winning, have the courage to ask for me. No man but you has my consent to do so."

"Angel. Oh, Cybele, this is more than I can realize. I will try to be worthy."

"You are worthy, or I would not encourage you in your bashful timidity. I have appreciated your manhood and your worth from the hour we met. My father likes you. He said, as you yourself told me, that if I was found through your efforts he would grant any favor you asked."

"It is true."

"Then boldly ask my hand at a proper time and he will not say no."

"I will."

And the declaration was sealed—in the usual way.

The next day, Alva De Lorme was buried with imposing ceremony on a beautiful hill near the harbor, and over his grave a weeping willow casts its somber shade. Sincere mourners laid his young form beneath the ever-green sod of that lovely isle, and his memory is cherished by those who knew him best and loved him most.

The next day the Queen of the Sea cleared for an English port, the nearest to Strathmere Castle. The Zephyr, an hour later, cleared for New York.

Our story is coming to an end. A short glance at a few of our characters and it will draw its last breath.

While the Queen of the Sea was plowing her way across the blue Atlantic toward the English shore, bearing a glad and noble company, a vessel, coming into Baltimore, from Bahia in Brazil, brought the mere wreck of a man, mental and physical, on principles of charity.

That wreck was Ebenezer Wilkins; with memory impaired, unable to tell a connected story, he reappeared in New York. As he was unfit for duty, he was dropped from the rolls, and that was the last of him, so far as public life was concerned.

A year went by and Captain Barnacle went into the Custom-house to enter the schooner Queen of the Sea, of which he was the captain and owner, just back from England in ballast.

The collector saw him, and not knowing of any change in his life said:

"You are here, I perceive. The man Wilkins is here, too, and says he was not a deserter!"

"I care not what he, or you, or any other second-class politician has to say," was the cool rejoinder. "As the senior member of the firm of Barnacle, Munk & Munker, the son-in-law of the wealthiest peer in England, the owner of millions in hand and more to come—one, too, who intends to go to Washington to basket your official head in a few days, I can afford to smile at your insolence and pity your ill-breeding."

The collector was squelched on the spot.

He stood a moment as if paralyzed and then stammered:

"He must be crazy, or I am!"

The conundrum was too much for him.

He made inquiry and found that Barnacle had not stretched the truth.

THE END.

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